

INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR PAUL WELLSTONE

January 6-19, 1997

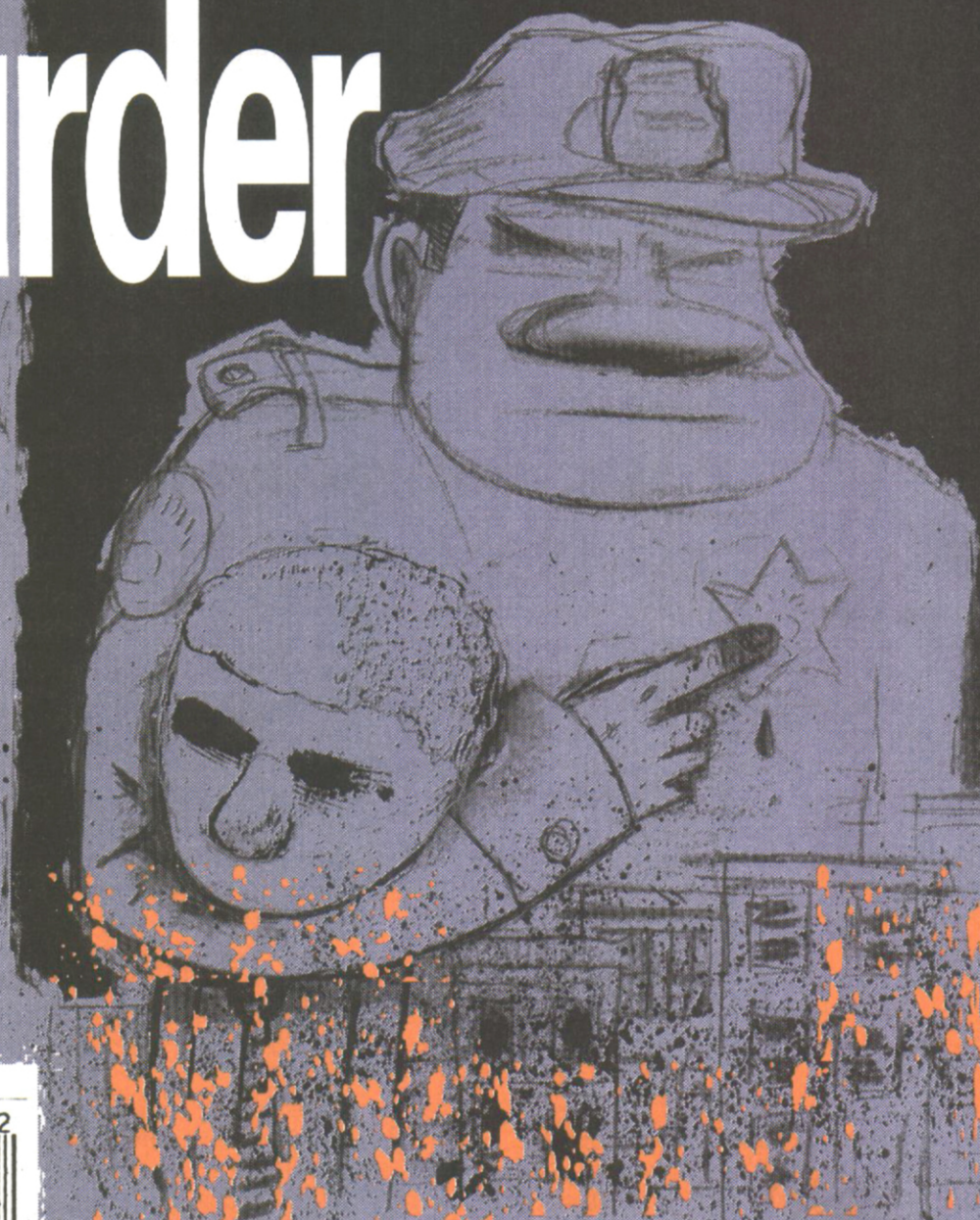
# In THESE TIMES

GETTING AWAY WITH

# Murder

The black community is besieged by cops who use their badge as a license to kill.

Salim Muwakkil reports



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Also: Robert McClory on the political fault lines in the Roman Catholic Church

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# EDITORIAL

## THE ILLUSORY CRISIS

**T**he Social Security system is a model of good government. It benefits almost all Americans, especially workers who live past their mid-60s. In 40 years, it has cut the number of elderly living below the official poverty line from 35 percent to 12 percent. It provides disability benefits to those unable to work and an average of \$700 per month to minor children whose working parents die. Furthermore, administrative costs are less than 1 percent of benefit payments, far less than private pension systems.

Perhaps the very success of this government program explains why a whole industry has grown up to terrorize Americans into believing that Social Security is approaching a crisis. Few issues in public life have been more lied about by right-wing ideologues and by the entire range of our corporate media. This has created a generation of young people who believe they will never receive the benefits for which they are now being taxed. In fact, more young Americans are said to believe in UFOs than in the likelihood of receiving their retirement income.

Those now trying to dismantle the Social Security system, of course, argue that they intend only to save it. They claim that the annual surplus of Social Security tax revenue over payouts—now at \$60 billion a year and projected to total \$3.3 trillion by 2020—will disappear in about 25 years, and that it will take only another 10 years or so to use up the accumulated kitty.

To solve this problem, seven of the 13 members of the Social Security Advisory Council recently proposed some form of privatization. Five of the members would have individual workers manage all or part of their Social Security contributions. Under this plan, millions of investment portfolios would be created, and workers would make their own decisions about what stocks to buy. The theory is that the stock market will rise at a faster rate than the interest paid on the special bonds in which the surplus is now supposed to be invested, and will therefore keep the system solvent.

The problem with this and similar proposals—besides

the social fragmentation that such plans would accelerate—is that they would cost more than the current system, and many workers would lose their savings as a result of bad investments. According to the Social Security Advisory Council, these plans would require an additional tax of 1.6 percent to pay the added administrative costs, and the federal government would have to lend the system as much as \$1 trillion to cover the expense of transition from the current system to a privatized one. The

main beneficiaries of the new system would be the stockbrokers, who would charge for managing each account and for every individual transaction. Wall Street would make a killing under such a reform.

In fact, however, the crisis is illusory. The Social Security Administration (SSA) bases its estimate that surpluses will end in 2020 on a projected annual GDP growth rate of only 1.49 percent. Yet GDP has grown by an average of 3.5 percent for the past 75 years. If the future rate is anywhere near the historic average, Social Security will run a surplus indefinitely—without tax

increases or benefit cuts. But even if the growth rate is close to SSA projections, a tax increase no larger than the 1.6 percent proposed by the “reformers” would keep the current system solvent for decades beyond 2020. So, too, would the inclusion of the four million government workers not currently covered by Social Security.

The “reformers” do have one valid concern. The accumulating Social Security fund should be segregated and protected, so that it is there if needed. In fact, the Congress “borrows” the Social Security surplus each year to hide the true extent of the federal deficit. This year, for example, the deficit is \$168 billion, but we are told it is \$108 billion because the \$60 billion Social Security surplus is treated as if it were ordinary income. So by 2020, when there should be a \$3.3 trillion surplus, there will be nothing but government IOUs. If the money is then needed, it will have to be raised by new taxes or by the sale of government bonds, neither of which will be easy to sell to the public.

That is why we have proposed (see “How to save Social Security,” April 29, 1996) that the Social Security fund administrators invest surplus funds in the private market. Fund administrators might invest some of the money in stocks, but most of the money should be put in development bonds for infrastructure, low-cost housing, education loans and other forms of socially useful public investment. That way, if the surplus is ever needed, it will be available. ◀

*Recent proposals to privatize Social Security would line Wall Street's pockets—and bankrupt ordinary people.*

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 "...with liberty and justice for all"

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COVER © 1997 PETER HANNAN

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Blacks are being gunned down  
 by white cops who use their badge  
 as a license to kill.

SALIM MUWAKKIL

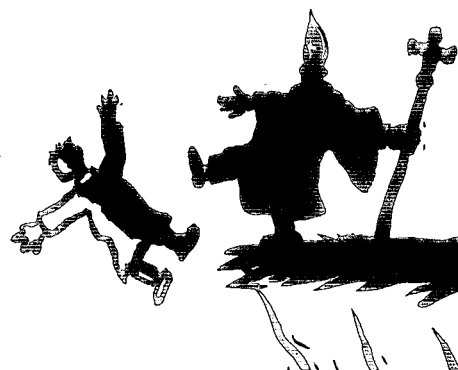
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# LETTERS

## Chains good

Here's an amusing bit of irony. Guess where I discovered your magazine, the very issue which featured Mandy Stadtmiller's tedious whine about the evils of Barnes & Noble superstores ("Survival of the biggest," September 30). You guessed it, in a Barnes & Noble superstore. What would have been the chances of me, or anyone, finding a non-mainstream magazine like yours in one of your lost and lamented independent bookstores? Little to none, I expect.

I am amazed that a progressive publication like *In These Times* (and you're not the only one) would not be overjoyed about any business promoting literacy and reading on the scale of the megastores. So what if publishers pay the big chains to feature up-and-coming authors and new titles? So what if the big chains are

offered discounts for buying in quantity and then pass the discounts on to the consumer? The publishers benefit, the authors benefit, and the readers benefit. Where's the problem? The great variety and selection of books on history, science, self-improvement, art, politics, philosophy, religion, fiction and you name it should make the megastores welcomed and lauded, not fired at with cheap shots.

Earl L. Dachslager  
The Woodlands, Texas

## Chains bad

"Starbucked," Nicole Nolan's November 11 story about the "aggressive," "ruthless," even "predatory" strategies to which Starbucks so often resorts to crash its way into a market and drive its competitors out of business really struck a nerve.

I happen to be the proprietor and co-owner of a small, just-barely-making-it coffeehouse in the Beverly neighborhood on Chicago's far southwest side. It is rumored that not long ago Starbucks approached the landlord of a property immediately across the street from my establishment and made him an offer that few landlords could refuse. Starbucks has pledged to sign a 20-year lease, but the final decision is still pending.

Where there is one Starbucks, as Nolan noted, there's bound to be a cluster before long. Like so many other small businesses staring down the barrel of national chain stores, my coffeehouse—along with two other independents in the area—may soon face extinction.

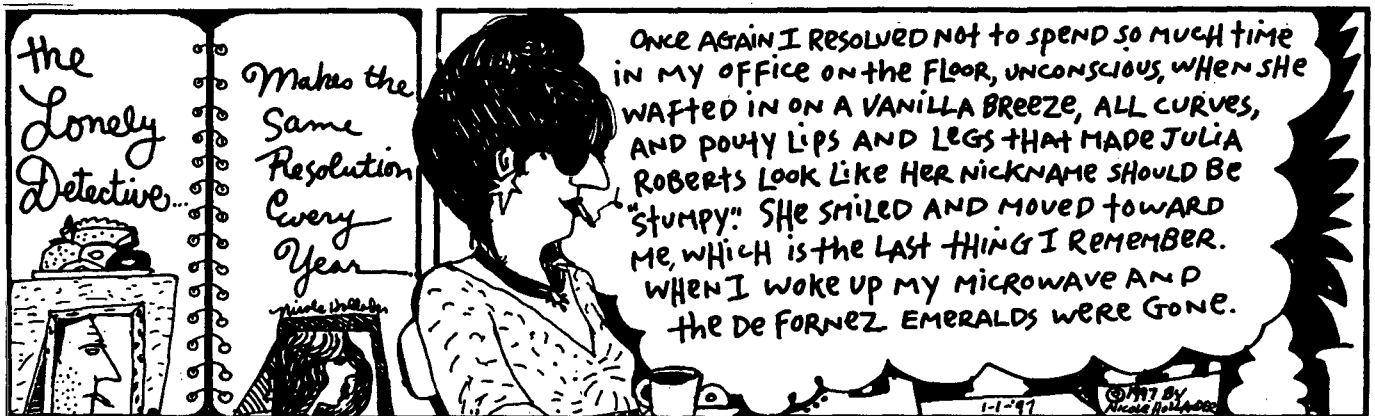
The question is, what can we small business people do to resist the corporate tide? Better yet, what can we do to fight back? The success of the "Save the local economy, stop Starbucks" movements in Toronto, Minneapolis, San Francisco and elsewhere is a cause for optimism.

Effective resistance begins with awareness. Your article is a beginning. At the very least, a grassroots campaign ought to make our neighbors aware that community-based businesses of all kinds return far greater economic and civic dividends to the people living in the community than the national chains can.

Linda Cooper  
Proprietor/Co-owner, Cafe Luna  
Chicago, Ill.

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander



## Think globally, play locally

It's always puzzled me why anyone gives a damn about professional sports, since the "home teams" are such in name only. Rather than buy teams, as Neil deMause suggests ("Buy the bums out," December 9), the cities should take back their names—which they already own—and start new football, basketball, baseball and hockey leagues in which all the players must have lived for at least ten years within 50 miles of the team city. (Okay, give Atlanta all of Georgia, but limit Brooklyn to Brooklyn.) Then the locals would have a reason to cheer the home team.

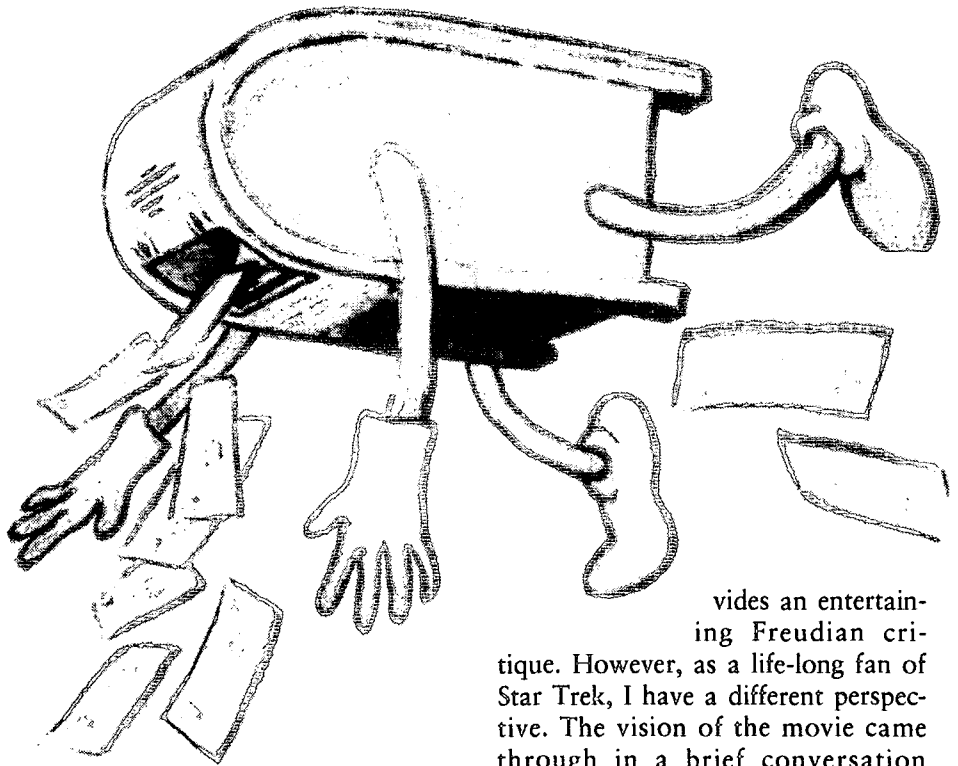
If the Steinbrenners want to continue to own sports teams, let them have names like the Microsoft Moneygrubbers or the Disney Hold-outs. And if colleges want to field teams bearing their names, they should recruit and admit students without reference to high school sports performance and ask their sophomores if anyone would be interested in playing intermural games. (I'm rather proud that the college I attended had the record for basketball losing streaks until they lost it to the college at which I teach.)

Art Hilgart  
Kalamazoo, Mich.

## We laughed 'til we cried

Seldom has there been such laughter around my dinner table (tears in our eyes!) as that occasioned by my reading aloud Bill Boisvert's review of *Star Trek: First Contact* ("Warped drives," December 9) the day after my family had attended the movie. Surely Boisvert must be joking. A psycho-babble satire, perhaps?

The entire piece was absurd, in my view, but I will mention only one specific: his assumption that the Ferengis represent the Jews. In all my years of



watching *Star Trek*, such a thought has never occurred to me. It appears to me that the Ferengis are a mockery of American capitalists/hyper-consumers, regardless of religion. An informal survey of several Trekkie friends of mine found that they have the same opinion.

While Boisvert is, of course, entitled to his opinion of the movie, I wonder why it was published in *ITT*. Is such nonsense *really* part of leftism? If so, I might have to rethink my own self-identification as a leftist.

*Star Trek* movies are fantasy, meant to be enjoyed. Dissecting the movies looking for homoeroticism, anti-Semitism, etc., and then writing scholarly-sounding articles is simply silly. The resulting article was more of a fantasy than the movie itself!

Sharon Tremble  
Santa Rosa, Calif.

## Star Trek socialism

Concerning Bill Boisvert's *Star Trek: First Contact* movie review: He pro-

vides an entertaining Freudian critique. However, as a life-long fan of *Star Trek*, I have a different perspective. The vision of the movie came through in a brief conversation between Captain Picard and a 21st-century woman. Picard described life on 24th-century earth: There is no need for money; society has moved beyond greed and materialism.

More to the point, the *Star Trek* series and movies envision world federalism (actually, planetary federalism) and, yes, democratic socialism! This is not to deny that the vision for the producers of *Star Trek* is big profits: e.g., moving "Next Generation" from the small screen to the big screen. But at its best, *Star Trek* provides a vision of individuality within community versus soulless, technological collectivism. Another redeeming aspect of *First Contact* is the freedom, self-determination, solidarity, comradeship, loyalty and self-sacrifice shown by the crew members and earthlings as they battle evil.

Robert J. Cromwell  
Haysville, Kan.

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you wished to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters.



# InSHORT

back, and the new contract over-  
turns most of the concessions the  
company had imposed on workers  
in the meantime.

"It's amazing that we're coming  
out the way we are," says an  
exhausted but elated Roger Gates,  
president of the local that represents  
Bridgestone workers in Decatur, Ill.

In May 1995, the scene was very  
different. After spending 10 months  
on the picket line, the local's  
members offered to return to  
work unconditionally. Even so,  
the workers only slowly  
regained their jobs, because the  
company had replaced hun-  
dreds of them with scabs. As  
few as 10 percent of workers  
were rehired initially. Their  
union, the United Rubber  
Workers, was bankrupt.

Then, a month after the  
strike ended, the Rubber  
Workers merged with the Unit-  
ed Steelworkers of America,  
which organized an all-out  
mobilization.

"If it hadn't been for the  
merger," says Gates, "there's no  
way we could've kept up the  
pressure on the company. I  
think it's one thing the compa-  
ny hadn't counted on."

The Steelworkers added  
organizers, strategic smarts and  
cash to the battle. "The whole  
idea with the unification was  
that we needed more power and  
a new model to take on these  
global corporations," says Steel-  
workers spokesman Gary Hub-  
bard. In fact, the Bridgestone  
battle was the largest the union  
had ever mounted, according to  
Steelworkers President George  
Becker. It produced demonstra-

tions and job actions by workers in 26 countries, including a  
3-hour strike in Argentina, three 45-minute walkouts in  
Brazil and several solidarity marches in Japan, where  
Bridgestone is based.

The Steelworkers persuaded the Clinton administration  
to publicly rebuke Bridgestone for its massive use of "per-  
manent replacements." The union went after Bridgestone  
distributors and suppliers, and ran radio ads condemning  
the company. Bridgestone workers actively organized on



## Bridgestone backs down

It took a 10-month strike, 3.6 million handbills, 63,000  
yard signs, 16,000 events and visits to 16 countries, but  
Bridgestone/Firestone, Inc. workers finally have what they  
wanted all along: a decent union contract. By a 3-1 margin,  
the 6,000 workers approved a new pact with the tire compa-  
ny on December 12.

In an era when strikes are rare and often unsuccessful,  
the Bridgestone battle stands out. All the workers who origi-  
nally struck the company in July 1994 will get their jobs

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their own behalf, traveling around the country and beyond to solicit support from other unions and anti-Bridgestone resolutions from legislative bodies. They waved black protest flags at the Democratic National Convention and held an action against the company at the Indianapolis 500.

Under the new contract, strikers will get partial back pay totaling about \$15 million in the form of supplemental bonuses of up to \$12,500 apiece. All workers got an immediate increase of 40 cents per hour and will get an additional raise in 1999—their first across-the-board raise since 1985. The company granted an amnesty to 42 out of 46 workers charged with strike-related misconduct and restored seniority rights. Workers regained their 11 holidays, after the company tried to cut them down to seven. They won back their right to arbitration as a final step in resolving grievances. Their pension plan was sweetened, and they fought off the company's demand that they pay part of their health insurance premiums. The contract will expire at the same time as contracts at other tire makers, which will make it easier for the union to hold all the employers to the same standard.

Bridgestone workers did suffer some defeats: The union agreed to continuous production at Bridgestone's seven plants, meaning 12-hour shifts with alternating 3- and 4-day weeks.

Nonetheless, says Joe Uehlein, secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO's Industrial Union Department, "the union got a great agreement—it's great that they got an agreement at all." Uehlein, who helped with the union's campaign, believes that after a year and a half, "Bridgestone finally became convinced that this union would never go away, and that's when a settlement became possible. A company will take you on if they think they can outlast you—even if it takes a few years. But if they think it's going to be forever, well, that's different."

—Laura McClure

## Hyping hypo-inflation

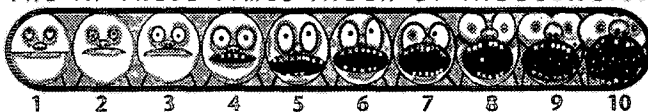
The commission of five economists appointed by the Senate Finance Committee in the summer of 1995 to evaluate the accuracy of the consumer price index (CPI) issued its final report in early December. The Boskin Commission's report concluded that the CPI, the government's main measure of the inflation experienced by consumers, overstates the true increase in the cost of living by 1.1 percent a year.

The accuracy of the CPI is likely to be raised as an issue in future budget battles because it is used to adjust Social Security and other government benefits each year, as well as to determine income tax brackets and the earned income tax credit. A 1-percent reduction in the annual cost-of-living adjustment would lead to a cut of approxi-

*Continued on page 9*

## APPALL-O-METER

THE IN THESE TIMES INDEX OF INDECENCIES



By David Futrelle

### Cookies, camping and carcinogens 8.4

The Treaty Line Council of Girl Scouts in Indiana had to give up their annual trips to Camp Wapi-Karnigi because of the recent discovery of such nasty substances as chromium and



trichloroethylene in the camp's well water. But don't worry. They may be able to return—sometime around the year 2497. According to the Richmond, Indiana *Palladium-Item*, the Indiana Department of Environmental Management has given the Dana Corp., whose plant contaminated the water, 500 years to clean up the mess.

Why the, er, generous deadline? A department spokeswoman explained that the contamination "didn't get there overnight, and it takes quite a few years to take care of it." The president of the Girl Scout council, Robert LaMaster, does not expect the girls to be trekking back to Camp Wapi-Karnigi any time soon. "I would like to see it open again, but I'm not too sure that's going to happen," he told the *Palladium-Item*. "Four or five hundred years. That's a little too long."

### Loaded for beer 8.3

The only thing better than a bunch of guys tromping through the woods in cammies shooting at everything that moves is that same bunch of gun-toting guys with a case of beer in their bellies. At least that's what Anheuser-Busch seems to think. The company's "Official Busch Hunting Gear" catalog offers beer-loving hunters such nifty prizes as camouflage beer holders and a floating Busch gun case. The company has also courted the hunter market with various publicity giveaways—like Budweiser key chains made from shotgun shells—and sponsors such events as the Budweiser Champion of Champions shotgun competition.

### Art attack, part three 7.8

Everybody's a critic: According to the on-line magazine *Slate*, a Canadian art student recently vomited on a Mondrian at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as part of a "trilogy of regurgitant statements" he was making (one vomit in each of the primary colors) to protest what he calls "oppressively trite and painfully banal art."

### Business experience 8.1

New York's most vicious gangstas aren't kids from the ghetto, but prep-school youngsters with a bad case of melanin-envy. A recent piece in *New York* magazine profiles kids from "butter condos" who've turned to a life of baggy clothes, drug dealing, random violence and shoplifting. But they don't plan to stay gangstas forever. "In a couple of years, I start off some ill, ill cartel," one butter gangsta, who plans to go to Columbia University, told the magazine. "Gonna have a legal job." Added another: "What we're doing's actually very good business experience."

# TEMPING at CITIBANK





*Continued from page 7*

mately \$280 billion in spending on indexed programs between now and 2005. It also would lead to an increase of approximately \$185 billion in the tax revenue collected over the same period.

To assemble the CPI, the Bureau of Labor Statistics measures price changes in 207 categories of consumer items in 44 cities each month. This requires over 70,000 price quotes. The commission cited several factors that could cause the CPI to overstate inflation. It argued that the index does not pick up the impact of consumers switching from goods that are rapidly becoming more expensive to goods that are becoming cheaper. It also argued that the index does not fully register the benefits from discount stores nor the gains from new products and quality improvements.

Many economists dispute the commission's findings. Before they were chosen, the five members of the commission—chaired by Michael Boskin, the top economist in the Bush administration—testified before the Senate Finance Committee that they believed the CPI substantially overstated inflation. Prominent experts who took a differing view—such as Janet Norwood, former commissioner of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and Jack Triplett, the former chief economist at the Commerce Department—were excluded from the commission. The commission did not hold public hearings and did not make its findings available for peer review prior to the release of the final report.

Despite the report's obvious utility for those who favor cutting social spending, it is not clear yet whether economists will accept the Boskin Commission's conclusions. Some of the implications are, to say the least, counterintuitive. The report would require that the economic history of the post-war era be rewritten. If the CPI is overstated by anywhere near the amount claimed, then people were much poorer in the recent past than current government data indicate: As recently as 1960, a majority of the nation must have had incomes below today's poverty line. An

exaggerated CPI would also mean that most people, empirical evidence to the contrary, have continued to see their incomes rise in recent years.

The findings also suggest that the future will be much brighter than had been thought, since incomes are growing far more rapidly than current data indicate. If projections from the Social Security Administration are adjusted in accordance with the commission's findings, the average worker in the year 2030 will earn \$56,000 in today's dollars. By 2050, the average wage will reach almost \$90,000. This compares with an average wage at present of just \$25,000. Ironically, these readjustments undercut those who cite the commission's findings as a rationale for cutting Social Security benefits. If Americans can look forward to such robust wage growth, why on earth would we want to mess with Social Security?

—Dean Baker

## NAFTA in '97

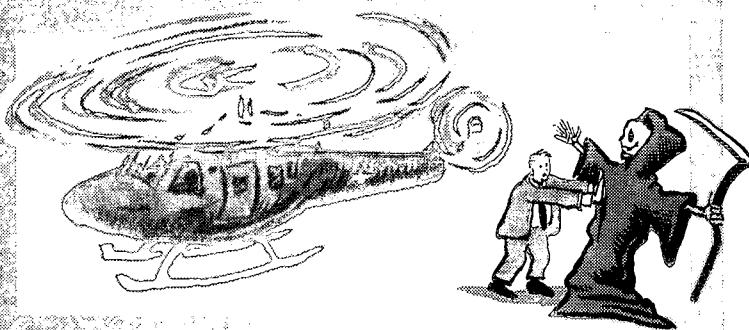
Throughout the campaign, President Bill Clinton tactfully avoided discussing his plans to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement, a hot-button issue that was sure to invite the barbs of Ross Perot and alienate key supporters in the labor movement. But now, with his re-election secured, the president is eagerly maneuvering to request "fast-track" authorization from Congress to negotiate Chile's entry into NAFTA.

Fast-track authorization prohibits Congress from changing trade agreements that the administration negotiates. Congress first granted fast-track authority to negotiate NAFTA to the Bush administration. Congress did not renew it for Clinton in 1994, however, when Republicans and Democrats in Congress split over the issue of linking labor conditions to trade. The trade issue later disappeared in the heat of the budget battle and the campaign. But now that Canada and Chile have signed a pact that lifts tariffs on 70 percent of trade between

## Behavior modification

IN THE AGE OF DOWNSIZING, LEAN AND MEAN CORPORATIONS are finding ways to squeeze a little more out of all their employees, even senior executives. When negotiating a contract with another corporation, one way to guarantee that top brass won't slack off is to "require resolution of all disputes within 24 hours or they escalate two levels up to an executive vice president," suggests Joe

Auer, president of International Computer Negotiations. How would this play out in practice? As Julia Kind reports in *Computer World*, Auer was involved in one contract which "stipulated that the CEO of an aerospace firm would attend the funeral of any U.S. military pilot killed in a crash of any helicopter designed and manufactured by the firm, ... present each of the dead pilot's survivors with a rose, and make a public statement regarding the accident." Kind reports that, while prior to this agreement there were several fatal helicopter accidents, since the contract was signed there have been none. —Joel Bleifuss





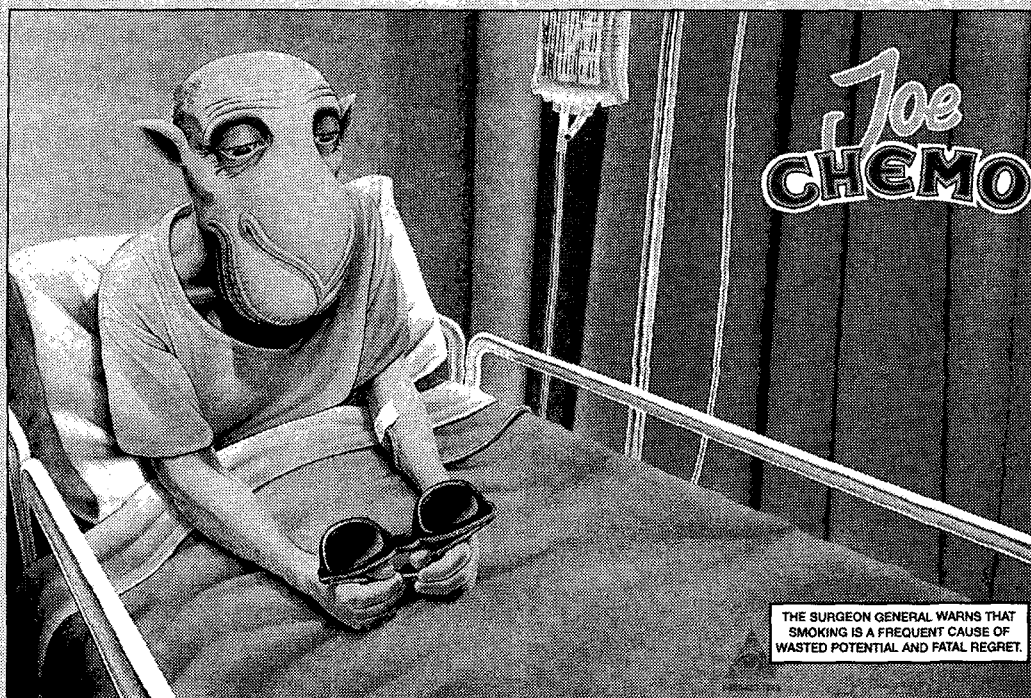
the two countries, Clinton has come under pressure from Chilean President Eduardo Frei, Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and multinational corporations with investments in Latin America to regain fast-track authorization and bring the United States to the negotiating table with Chile.

Clinton will face strong opposition—as he did in the 1993 battle over passage of the original NAFTA agreement—from labor unions, environmental groups and the staunchly anti-NAFTA supporters of Perot and Pat Buchanan. But this time around, the president and his allies in Congress will find it more difficult to persuade voters that free trade has improved their stan-

dard of living. A BankBoston survey of 1,003 U.S. residents released in November, for example, showed that 51 percent believe that trade agreements result in fewer U.S. jobs, while 57 percent believe that the United States should not sign new trade agreements with Latin America.

In addition to this skepticism, Clinton must try to assure his union allies that the administration has made an effort to protect the interests of workers under these international agreements. That's why this month he sent acting U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky to the inaugural meeting of the World Trade Organization in Singapore on a mission to persuade the 128-member nations to endorse an agreement upholding "core labor standards" and denouncing the use of child labor. After some major wrangling between rich and poor nations, a non-binding compromise agreement was reached calling for a "commitment to the observance of internationally recognized ... labor standards." In response to the agreement, AFL-CIO President John Sweeney applauded Barshefsky's "outstanding efforts" and said the AFL-CIO welcomes the decision, though he added that more remains to be done.

While Clinton may have scored a few points with labor in Singapore, obstacles still lie ahead in Congress. "Unlike 1993, there are now more anti-NAFTA Republicans sitting in Congress, which could make it harder for Clinton to muster the support he needs to push through this agreement



## Joe Chemo

**ADBUSTERS:** *JOURNAL OF THE MENTAL ENVIRONMENT*, A VANCOUVER-BASED MAGAZINE THAT critiques and parodies advertising, has launched a campaign to raise \$15,000 to buy a full-page ad in *Harper's* for the above spoof. Want to help? Call 1-800-663-1243. —J.B

ILLUSTRATION: RON TURNER / CONCEPT: SCOT PLOUS

with Chile," notes Chris McGinn of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch.

Multinational corporations, who are the principal beneficiaries of free trade, are well aware of these challenges and are covering all the bases. Leading telecommunications and financial services companies, including AT&T and Salomon Brothers, have lavished millions of dollars on both parties hoping to ensure bipartisan support for Chile's entry into NAFTA. Meanwhile, workers everywhere continue to see wages stagnate and working conditions deteriorate under the pressure of increased competition in the world labor market.

—Ron Bigler

## An abridged book convention

This year when the book publishing community convenes in Chicago for its annual convention, some of its biggest players will be missing. Historically, the springtime American Booksellers Association trade show has been the most important occasion for publishers to introduce their upcoming titles to the buyers who ulti-



mately decide what will make it onto bookstore shelves. Early buzz at the ABA has helped create bestsellers out of books by virtually unknown authors, like *The Prince of Tides* by Pat Conroy and *The Horse Whisperer* by Nicholas Evans.

But events in the past few years have changed the dynamics of the show.

Bookseller attendance has dropped, partly because the growth of superstore chains like Barnes & Noble and Borders has driven many independent bookstores out of business, and partly because booksellers sense that the show is now less for their benefit than for the sale of books' foreign rights. Three years ago, in the hopes of leveling the playing field for its independent bookstore members, the ABA sued five publishers for violations of the Robinson-Patman Act, which protects smaller retailers from the large chains by prohibiting suppliers from charging different prices to similar customers. In response, Penguin pulled out of the show in 1995 and Random House followed suit in 1996. Their official reason for dropping out was they were unsure if the convention provided the most economical way of promoting books to booksellers.

This summer, the ABA sold its interest in the show to Association Expositions & Services, which renamed it Book Expo America. Since then, Simon & Schuster, Bantam Doubleday Dell, the Putnam Berkley Group, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, the Hearst Book Group and Harper Collins have all dropped out of the event, opting to focus instead on the smaller regional conventions held in the fall.

Assuming that booksellers and the media continue to attend, small publishers like Coffeehouse Press, based in St. Paul, Minn., will not miss their larger siblings. "In recent years, the ABA had become more of an opportunity to reach the media, Hollywood, international markets and reading-series representatives than to reach booksellers," says Allan Kornblum, Coffeehouse Press' publisher. "If they continue to come, we'll get more attention without the big publishers there. If not, then the value of the show is diminished."

Of course, Coffeehouse Press hopes to sell to bookstores as well. "If the whole thing comes down to 25 independents and four chains, then I don't know if Book Expo will continue making sense," Kornblum conjectures. As a small publisher, he

worries that a shrinking book-buying base in the industry could hurt the dissemination of diverse points of view, which often originate with independent presses.

Brad Jonas, president of Powell's Books in Chicago and founder of CIROBE, an annual international bargain-book trade show, says the industry is "holding its breath" about this year's Book Expo and is not sure what to expect. He said he thinks the lawsuits, which have now all been settled, were an excuse for publishers to back out of the show. "The growth of the show was predicated on a different style of business than exists now, and it didn't change," he explains. "There are fewer bookstores even though there is more book buying."

—Bridget Kinsella

#### Sources

Laura McClure is a freelance writer based in Brooklyn, N.Y.

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Ron Bigler is a freelance writer based in New York.

Bridget Kinsella is the Midwest correspondent for *Publishers Weekly*.

### THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

By Peter Hannan



## THE FIRST STONE

# OUR MAN IN THE SENATE

Joel Bleifuss interviews Sen. Paul Wellstone

**S**ix years ago, *In These Times* featured Paul Wellstone on its cover, under the headline, "Finally something to cheer about." Though outspent, Wellstone had beaten incumbent U.S. Sen. Rudy Boschwitz by a two-point margin with a grass-roots campaign that energized progressive Minnesotans. This November, in a rematch, Wellstone again emerged victorious, beating Boschwitz 50 percent to 41 percent in a three-way race. He spoke to *In These Times* on December 17.

**How would you compare this year's campaign to the one six years ago?**

From the beginning, it was clear that we were to be the Republicans' most targeted Senate race. They thought I was the most vulnerable, and it was clear that the attacks were going to be personal and vicious. And they were, from day one.

We decided early on not to bob and weave on the issues, but to take the Republicans on directly. And we put a lot of resources and effort into the grass-roots part of the campaign. In the last week—and this is no exaggeration—we made 10,000 get-out-the-vote phone calls every hour during the day, none of them from outside of Minnesota. We held almost 800 house meetings where from 30 to 400 people showed up, and my wife Sheila and I were at many of them. These were the people in cities, towns and neighborhoods who did the get-out-the-vote calls, went door to door and did literature drops.

That was our juggernaut and the reason why Minnesota had the second highest voter turnout in the country, about 66 percent. It's also why we ended up winning by a pretty big margin. The turnout was much higher than in 1994, particularly in ghettos, barrios and working-class

neighborhoods. We kept our integrity and applied it to all aspects of the campaign. It was a great victory and I am really proud of what people did out here.

**Why do you think the Democrats failed to recapture the House and the Senate?**

I wasn't able to spend a lot of time analyzing what other people were doing, but there are a couple things I think happened. Some candidates were trying to match TV ads with TV ads, and putting precious little effort into having the capacity to touch people at the grass-roots level, galvanize them and turn them out to vote. That was a big mistake, especially in close races—and there were many races where Democrats lost by very narrow margins. People say to me, including some of the people in the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, that they are looking at Minnesota and our decision to invest resources in this grass-roots operation.

Second, I think in order to be able to galvanize people, you have to give them a reason to turn out to vote. If Democrats running for office move away from basic bread-and-butter issues—economic justice, education, jobs, protecting pensions, health care, living wages, fair trade—people won't see the connection to their own lives. The vast majority of people in this country—and you need a majority to win elections—are interested in reforming the government so that, more often than not, the government will be on their side, the side of ordinary people. And if that is not the Democrats' major thrust when they are campaigning, you are not going to get a large turnout.

Third, I was told by a number of different people when we were back in Washington that, in the last couple of weeks, the stories about Indonesia and money and all the rest ended up hurting some of the people who were running in Senate races. I had senators tell me they had 20-point leads that evaporated to five points. Any number of people, including people who won, said that was a factor. It is hard for me to know because in Minnesota, it didn't affect us at all.

**You were criticized for changing your campaign contribution policies. What type of campaign finance reforms are needed?**

First, not to be defensive, I didn't really change anything. After the race in 1990, I said that after paying off my debts, I would only take contributions of under \$100 until I was in the next re-election cycle. Until then, I would fight for the changes that are needed. And I said, if they didn't take place, I would have to raise money again.

I have never gone against my word. I did have to raise money, that is true, in order to be able to take on what I knew was going to be a vicious attack. Even so, 75 percent



of our contributions were under \$200.

On campaign finance reform, there are now two missing ingredients without which I don't think it can happen. The first is citizen pressure. People must turn up the heat around the country. I am in almost daily contact with Sen. Russ

for this. You have to be very visible. You have to be very public and strong. You've got the bully pulpit." But that leadership is not yet there.

People really want to see the big money out of politics. They want elections, not auctions. I have a bill for public financing, and I think that would make a more level playing field. I have also worked with Feingold and Sen. John McCain (R-AZ). There are things in their bill that represent not merely a step sideways but a step forward.

Would you favor a constitutional amendment, as has been advocated by former Sen. Bill Bradley (D-NJ), that would do away with *Buckley vs. Valeo*, the Supreme Court ruling that equates campaign contributions with free speech?

Probably, though with some hesitation, because I am very conservative about constitutional amendments. I am very reluctant to tinker around with the First Amendment. But, perhaps more importantly, it takes seven years or so to pass such an amendment, and it can readily become a big cop-out for people in Congress who don't want to pass a reform bill now.

The Washington, D.C., chapter of the American Medical Association has come out for a single-payer system, and doctors around the country are beginning to realize that HMOs have a negative effect on how they practice medicine. Do you see the possibility of a revival of a movement for a single-payer health care system?

Initially, I think, a patient protection act that basically says the issue is who manages managed care has a better chance of passage. I would, by the way, apply the same consumer protections and due process guarantees for fee-for-service health care.

At the national level you have nine insurance companies that own and control over 60 percent of the managed-care plans. You are going to see a pretty strong consumer protection effort and a pretty strong provider/caregiver protection effort.

But as much as I would like it, I do not think we will see a nationwide effort for single payer. Based upon what I saw a couple of years ago, I don't expect to see a big hue and cry, much less a fight in the Congress, at least initially, for single payer or, for that matter, any kind of major universal health care coverage.



© PETER HANNAN

Feingold (D-WI) and others. My hope is that, come early February, we are going to have a "reform day" around the country where, on the same weekend, there will be face-to-face meetings with representatives and senators at which people say they want a real reform bill.

The second missing ingredient is presidential leadership. To push through any kind of reform like this, which goes against the grain of what a good many people in Congress want to do, you've got to have executive-centered action along with a lot of grass-roots pressure. I have personally said to President Clinton, "You have to be out there calling

**How do you evaluate the influence of the AFL-CIO's \$35 million political campaign?**

The AFL-CIO deserves a lot of credit for putting resources into the election campaigns. In the absence of its support, we probably would have done less well in the House races, which is where the federation focused. My guess is that, given what President Sweeney has talked about, the labor movement will also put considerable effort into building grass-roots politics, state by state, organizing and building coalitions, all of which I think has to be done.

**How should progressive Democrats respond to the balanced budget amendment? Where does the defense budget fit into the equation?**

Some of what the administration has done and is now talking about doing—the cuts in the child-nutrition programs, the cuts in assistance for legal immigrants, the cuts in affordable housing, and now we are battling over whether or not we are going to have any low-income energy assistance—is politically understandable. It is deficit reduction based on the path of least political resistance.

And that goes back to your question about campaign finance reform. The Republican Congress disproportionately targeted the most vulnerable citizens because they are not the heavy hitters, they are not well connected. They don't march on Washington every day with their lobbyists. That was politically understandable, but morally reprehensible. For the White House to accede to that now—and some of what it is talking about does—is outrageous, and I intend to oppose it on this.

This is going to be a brutal fight, and I am very worried because it is going to happen right at the beginning of the new session. I am worried about whether we are going to have enough external pressure on Congress to affect the outcome.

I don't have any doubt about what position I should take as a senator, or for that matter, what positions other progressive senators should take. The whole area of tax expenditure, corporate welfare, loopholes, deductions should be on the table—what Barlett and Steele talk about in their book *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes*, which has always been my textbook when I go to the floor. It is interesting that we talk about a commission on Medicare but not a commission on corporate welfare. And you better believe the Pentagon budget ought to be on the table.

Now, will the votes be there? I know they won't be, because I have had legislative amendments on both corporate welfare and the Pentagon budget. I know that those amendments won't pass. My role is to try to get as much done as possible and be pragmatic when there is a possibility of getting some concrete things accomplished. But the other role is to raise issues on the floor and to have amendments out there and to force embarrassing votes and to give people in the country—especially progressive forces—something they can get behind and fight for. I wish I could snap my fingers and will it into existence, but

we have got a lot of building to do.

**Many progressive Democrats who live outside of Minnesota view you as their senator and themselves as part of your constituency. How do you see yourself fulfilling this national role?**

I don't know if I have an answer yet. I am going to think about the way I can make the biggest contribution on the national level to building a progressive politics. We have to do it. Many of us have to do it. That's crystal clear. I am determined to have a good strong national presence as a senator. And I can play a role on the floor of the Senate, and some by traveling nationally to help others. I don't want to make too large a claim, or sound conceited, but I am determined to be a United States senator who can contribute to the organizing that builds a much stronger progressive politics in this country. It won't happen in Washington.

But I am determined to be rooted in Minnesota. For what the people in this state did for me, after all that distortion and attacks, I can't ever begin to thank them enough.

**What insights have you gained in your first term about the obstacles that progressive politicians face?**

The learning I had to do was of two kinds. The first has turned out in a really positive way, and the second is the challenge before us.

I like to speak and I like to debate—on those occasions when there are actual debates. But I learned that only when you know the rules and you know your leverage can you really make a difference. And I do. I pride myself on a good sense of timing, and about knowing when to intervene and when to be on the floor. I have really become good, which took time to learn. That is why I think I can crank it up 10 levels now.

The second part goes to the discussion we are having. On any number of different issues, I keep waiting to see people fight for certain things. I look for people to take on some of these budget cuts. The cuts have nothing to do with welfare reform; they are attacks on poor people. I know that there are going to be more impoverished children as a result of a particular legislative bill, so I look for people around the country to take it on. I look for the pressure on senators and representatives not to pass legislation that will impoverish more children. But so far, that has not happened.

I have bills out there that, in effect, say: What are you doing cutting Pell Grants or Head Start or child-nutrition programs? Go after the subsidies for oil companies, tobacco companies, pharmaceutical companies. Go after corporate welfare. These loopholes and deductions, which haven't been examined since 1950, represent huge subsidies to people who don't need them. And then I look for pressure external to the process, and it is not there.

I know we have to keep turning the heat up around the country, and I want to see it happen everywhere, but we don't yet have the kind of forces that we need to marshal effective grass-roots politics. That has been the most difficult thing for me, because I want it to happen. I feel I ought to be able to help organize it. ◀



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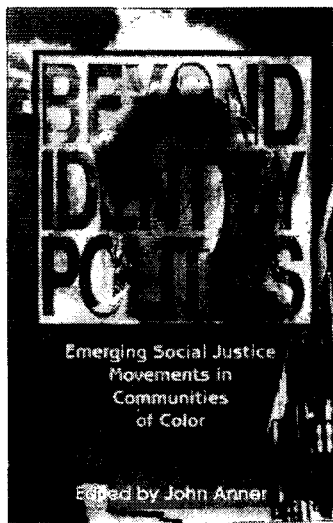
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**B L A C K A M E R I C A**

# Getting away with murder

O

*Black communities are being besieged by police who use their badge as a license to kill.*

By Salim Muwakkil

n October 24, Officer James Knight shot and killed 18-year-old Tyrone Lewis, an unarmed black man, during a routine traffic stop in St. Petersburg, Fla. Lewis apparently failed to respond when Knight and his partner ordered him out of the car after pulling him over for speeding in the city's predominantly black south side. When Knight's partner broke one of the car windows, the car lurched forward, bumping Officer Knight, who then threatened to shoot. Lewis' car then reportedly lurched forward again, this time striking Knight forcefully. Knight fired his gun three times, shooting Lewis twice in the arm and once in the chest. Police later learned the car was stolen and that Lewis was wanted on three arrest warrants. But community residents who witnessed the incident insist that the police were never threatened.

Lewis' death sparked a riot in the resort city's African-American neighbor-

hood. The disturbance covered a 20-square block area; 29 buildings and many cars were set on fire. Eleven people were injured. The grand jury decision not to indict the police officer provoked another round of civil unrest three weeks later.

While so far only the black community in St. Petersburg has responded with such destructive rage, black neighborhoods across the country are seething with anger at the impunity enjoyed by police officers who kill black men.

Relations between African-Americans and the police have been antagonistic throughout U.S. history. The first organized police forces in this country were slave patrols created to keep enslaved Africans in check. The troubled relationship between blacks and the police has erupted sporadically in violence: Most of the "long hot summer" riots during the '60s were sparked by charges of police brutality. The urban unrest in Miami during the '80s was associated with allegations of police violence. And the nation's largest urban explosion occurred in Los Angeles following the 1992 acquittal of the police who brutalized motorist Rodney King.

The police are using deadly force more and more frequently these days—and getting away with it. The stories are eerily similar:

- July 30, 1995: Joseph Gould, an unarmed homeless black man, is shot to death outside a downtown Chicago nightclub by Gregory Becker, an off-duty white cop. The officer is initially charged with official misconduct, but vigorous protests convince the Illinois state attorney to increase the charge to armed violence. The city now anxiously awaits Becker's February trial.

- October 3, 1995: Jorge Guillen, a Honduran immigrant, dies of suffocation in police custody in Chicago. The state attorney's office declines to prosecute the officers, citing lack of evidence of any criminal conduct. The Office of Professional Standards (OPS), an independent agency of civilian staffers considered by many to be in the pocket of the police, nevertheless concludes that the three officers involved used excessive force. The agency recommends that they receive short suspensions. The recommendation, however, is overruled on December 11, 1996, by the Chicago Police Board, which cites conflicting medical evidence and inconsistent witness statements.

- June 13, 1996: Aswan Keshawn Watson, an unarmed 21-year-old black man, is killed when three plainclothes officers fire 24 bullets into him during a drug raid in Brooklyn's Flatbush section.

- October 17, 1996: Aaron White, the black owner of a television repair shop in the west-central Mississippi town of Leland, is shot to death by a white policeman. Initially, police say the 29-year-old White was trying to escape from



the scene of a traffic accident and fired first on Officer Jackie Blaylock, who successfully returned fire. The police later revise their story, saying White accidentally killed himself in the escape attempt.

•November 19, 1996: James Cooper, a black 19-year-old, is shot to death by Officer Michael Marlow during a traffic stop in Charlotte, N.C. The white officer tells investigators he fired because he thought Cooper was reaching for a gun. No gun is found, but Marlow is not charged.

Examples of blacks and other minorities killed by police officers with near impunity could fill three times this space. Unfortunately, the list is still not long enough to convince political leaders to effectively confront the racism responsi-

ble for these crimes.

Escalating police violence reflects a growing fear of black criminality among the broader population. The skyrocketing rate of black imprisonment and the profits to be made from the prison industry (see "My own private Alcatraz," December 23, 1996) suggest that the criminal justice system and young African-Americans are increasingly becoming each other's sworn enemies.

"Racist assumptions are built into the very foundation of American policing," says William Geller, associate director of the Police Executive Research Forum, a Washington-based group that studies law enforcement issues. Geller, the author of several books on police abuse, is not surprised by

## Impunity in Pittsburgh

**O**n the same day that Tyrone Lewis was gunned down in St. Petersburg, an all-white jury in Pittsburgh acquitted Officer John Vojtas in the suffocation death of Jonny Gammage. The 31-year-old black businessman died in the custody of five police officers after being stopped for "driving erratically" in the predominantly white Pittsburgh suburb of Brentwood.

The case combines all the volatile elements of America's vexing racial dynamic. The five cops were white, the driver was a black man and the car he was driving was expensive, a Jaguar. Gammage, from Syracuse, N.Y., had been visiting his cousin and business partner Ray Seals of the Pittsburgh Steelers. He was unarmed and had no criminal record. Gammage's connection to Seals gave the story front-page headlines. Otherwise, his death probably would have been just one more short news item relegated to the back pages.

Pittsburgh is one of the Northeast's most segregated cities, and the poverty rate among Pittsburgh's blacks is among the nation's highest. William Tompkins, the vice president of the Pittsburgh branch of the Urban League, says race relations in the city are as bad as he's ever seen them. "The shooting of the brother named Many Bey in East Liberty—15 times, apparently while he was on the ground. The shooting of the brother in the Armstrong Tunnel, who was killed and found to be unarmed. And now Gammage," he says. "All African-American males. All deceased."

The coroner's jury urged that all five officers—Lt. Milton Mulholland, Patrolman Michael Albert, Patrolman John Vojtas, Sgt. Keith Henderson and Officer Shawn Patterson—be charged with criminal homicide. But District Attorney Robert Colville immediately dropped charges against two of the officers and charged the remaining three each with a single count of involuntary manslaughter.

In the trial of Officer Vojtas, the presiding judge decided that the jury should be selected from areas outside of Allegheny County where there was less publicity about the case. An all-white jury was gathered from Chester County, 290 miles to the east, where blacks make up about 6 percent of the population. Prosecutor Anthony Krastek thought his evidence against Vojtas was solid. He had proof that Vojtas instigated the 1995 confrontation by striking Gammage. As the victim lay motionless following the five-cop assault, Vojtas was quoted as saying, "I hope he dies." Yet the jury voted to acquit.

Many in the city's black community are not surprised by the verdict. "You can almost bet that mainstream America is using just about every high-profile trial of a black man to get revenge for O.J. Simpson's acquittal," says Khalid Raheem, a well-known organizer. "The thing is, young black men had a target drawn on them long before Johnny Cochran pulled O.J.'s balls out of the sand."

The trial of the two other police officers—Mulholland and Albert—ended in a mistrial last October after a coroner blurted out improper testimony. The two are scheduled to be retried, but, following Vojtas's acquittal, hopes of conviction are not high.

"It seems clear to me that issues of race are more important than issues of justice," says Raheem. —S.M.



the ratcheting up of tensions between police and black men. The widening gap between the rich and the poor combined with the absence of well-paying jobs in urban America have placed these two populations at loggerheads, he says.

Amnesty International released a report in late June that documented a disturbing pattern of police violence in America's largest police force. Entitled "Police Brutality and Excessive Force in the New York City Police Department," the 72-page report found that the New York Police Department routinely violates international human rights standards as well as its own guidelines governing the use of deadly force. The 18-month investigation found that charges of police brutality in New York climbed from 977 in 1987 to more than 2,000 in 1994. Deaths in police custody rose from 11 in 1991 to 24 in 1994. According to the report, most of the victims were minorities, while most of the offending police officers were white. Amnesty International concluded that excessive use of force has probably led to many more deaths in police custody than the New York Police Department is willing to acknowledge. The report cited several cases in which men in custody subjected to choke holds or sprayed with capicum pepper died of apparently related seizures or asphyxiation.

The report also noted a troubling new development: black undercover police officers being shot by their white colleagues. New York City transit officers Derwin Pannell and Desmond Robinson both were mistaken for criminals

and shot by white officers. On November 18, 1992, Pannell was attempting to arrest a farebeater in a dark subway station in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn, when he was confronted by white transit officers who mistook him for a mugger because he was rifling through the woman's handbag with his gun drawn. In later testimony, Pannell said his fellow officers did not identify themselves before opening fire. A Brooklyn grand jury cleared Pannell's assailants of all charges.

Officer Robinson had his gun drawn and was in pursuit of a suspect on August 24, 1994, when he was mistaken for a criminal and shot by Peter Del Debbio, an off-duty police officer on his way home. Testimony and evidence in the case suggest that Del Debbio stood over Robinson as he lay helpless on the subway platform and shot him three times in the back. Del Debbio was convicted last March of second-degree assault and sentenced to 200 hours of community service and five years' probation.

New York City, of course, is not the only place where white cops have mistakenly shot black cops. In Nashville, Reggie Miller, a black cop, was working on an undercover prostitution sting when five white police officers pulled him over for a traffic violation and forced him to the ground. The officers didn't give Miller the opportunity to identify himself, and within minutes they began beating him for no apparent reason. The offending officers were initially dismissed from the police force, but were later reinstated by the city's civil service commission.

The Amnesty International report may cause a temporary spasm of civic embarrassment in New York, but if previous experience in Chicago and Los Angeles is any indication, don't expect much to change. Amnesty International issued a 1990 report describing police torture and brutality in Chicago and an equally scathing 1992 report on the Los Angeles Police Department. Neither the police nor their political overseers in either city have moved to address the concerns raised in those reports.

"All of this is part of a larger crackdown on African-Americans," says political scientist and author Andrew Hacker. "White Americans have decided that enough is enough. They want longer prison sentences, and welfare mothers to go out and work. White America is tired of hearing about racism and says 'We've done enough.'"

In these times of racial and economic polarization, police officers are increasingly in the line of fire, called upon to quell the growing antagonisms. Criminal justice solutions, however, are woefully inadequate to heal the deep social wounds that plague contemporary America.

Placing the black community under police siege will do little to facilitate the struggle for enlightened solutions. Instead, police violence "in the line of duty" will stir up more black anger. When that anger reaches the boiling point, we can expect to see more St. Petersburgs. That would mark the beginning of a downward spiral whose repercussions, rest assured, will not be limited to the inner cities. ◀



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UNITED NATIONS

# Bye bye Boutros

*Boutros-Ghali  
gave mostly  
loyal service to  
Washington,  
but that didn't  
help him  
keep his job.*

By Jim Wurst

**T**

he decision to make Kofi Annan the next U.N. secretary general was the best possible outcome of a series of events that has hurt both the United Nations and the country that provoked the succession crisis—the United States.

The U.N. Security Council selected Annan, a Ghanaian, on December 13, after France withdrew its veto of his appointment. (Annan was the only finalist whose first European language was not French.) Annan, most recently the undersecretary general for peacekeeping operations, is the first black African and first career U.N. civil servant to become secretary general.

The fight over the United Nation's leadership had the makings of a debilitating battle. Boutros Boutros-Ghali had been at odds with U.S. Ambassador Madeleine Albright over several issues, most notably the use of force in Bosnia. It

only took a couple of Republican presidential candidates making fun of Boutros-Ghali's name for Clinton administration officials (though never the president himself) to announce in June that the United States would not support a second term for the Egyptian diplomat.

The announcement was a blow to Boutros-Ghali, who gave five years of mostly loyal service to Western goals of cutting staff, removing the United Nations from economic issues and taking the flak for military failures in Bosnia and Rwanda that were not of the agency's making. It would be hard to find someone from the Third World more attuned than Boutros-Ghali to the agenda of Washington, Paris and London. As one Latin American ambassador quipped after his selection in 1991, "They think they selected an African. They've really gotten a Parisian."

Yet right-wing Republicans were able to frame the debate in the United States. They demonized the United Nations and Boutros-

Ghali, even though most of their charges against the secretary general—that he wanted to create a supranational army and to levy global taxes—were fiction. Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), other right-wingers and the troglodytes on the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial page pounded him relentlessly. The *Journal* went so far as to charge that Louis Farrakhan's "Day of Atonement" rally outside the United Nations in October was part of a Boutros-Ghali/Arab plot to pressure Clinton to change his position.

The end game began on November 19, when the Security Council took its only official vote on Boutros-Ghali's candidacy. The vote on the resolution granting him a second term was 14-1 in favor, but since the United States cast the dissenting vote, the resolution failed. As one Boutros-Ghali partisan complained, "Anywhere else in the world, 14-1 means you win." Besides demonstrating once again the fundamentally undemocratic nature of the United Nations, the vote highlighted the United State's total isolation on the issue. Not even loyal ally Britain or countries dependent on U.S. aid, such as Honduras or Poland, sided with Washington.

In the next round, new names—including Annan's—began to surface. Despite pledges to reintroduce Boutros-Ghali's name, his backers never did, reportedly because they feared they could not maintain the original 14 votes. In any case, the United States threatened to withdraw its support of any African candidate if the Africans stuck with Boutros-Ghali. On December 4, Boutros-Ghali "suspended" his candidacy. Any chance that Clinton might reverse himself ended the next day when the president selected Albright, closely associated with the "Dump Boutros" drive, as his new secretary of state.

Initial reaction to Annan's selection from governments, U.N. staff and nongovernmental experts has been largely

favorable. Born in 1938, Annan earned degrees from U.S. and European universities and joined the United Nations in 1962. Though he has been in charge of peacekeeping since 1993, he spent the bulk of his career in administration, both in New York and in the field. Annan has a reputation as a genial, effective conciliator.

The differences between Annan and his predecessor are stark. Whereas Boutros-Ghali is aloof and autocratic, Annan likes to be called by his first name. The Egyptian never really tried to work with the U.N. staff, preferring instead to rely on a tight circle of advisers. By contrast, Annan knows how the system works and knows the people who make it work—or prevent it from working. There was an obvious sense of relief among the staff at U.N. headquarters after the selection of one of their own. Whatever Annan does as secretary general, he will not repeat his predecessor's performance in his dealings with the organization's bureaucracy. Boutros-Ghali's massive shake-ups left its entire structure unsettled for two years.

Jean Krasno, associate director of U.N. Studies at Yale University, calls Annan a smart and discreet diplomat. "He will work hard to make the secretariat a more effective body because he knows the weaknesses," she says. The president of the General Assembly, Ambassador Razali Ismail of Malaysia, describes Annan as the correct choice. "His appointment," Ismail says, "augurs well for the joint efforts of governments and the secretariat to reform the United Nations at this crucial time." Praise from Ismail is noteworthy, considering Malaysia never disguised its distaste for Boutros-Ghali and his pro-Western positions.

Now that the politicking has ended, what does this episode mean for the United Nation's future? Many wonder if Annan will be able to reform the world body. But the buzzword "reform" itself is misleading. Sen. Helms insists that the United States withdraw from the United Nations unless it cuts its staff from the current 9,000 to around 4,000 and reduces its annual budget from \$1 billion—about the same as the New York City Police Department—to \$250 million. Such drastic downsizing would constitute not reform, but suicide.

Back in the real world, Annan will face a long list of proposals, including better coordination among U.N. agencies,

more emphasis on preventive diplomacy, a larger role for the United Nations in disarmament agreements and a reassessment of country contributions, which means cutting the U.S. share of the budget to make its economic blackmail more difficult.

Krasno believes Annan "won't be pushed around because he has ideas of how things should work." Those ideas include greater meritocracy, which could cause problems. "Member states talk about meritocracy, but they still want their favors and the regional seats," Krasno says.

As for Annan's relations with Washington, Krasno believes that there has been careful work behind the scenes to ensure that there will be less resistance to him. Former U.S. Ambassador James Leonard, who is active in both Washington and New York politics, thinks the new secretary general will play well in Congress and calls Annan's selection "a triumph for Albright." Following that reasoning, as long as Albright's stock stays high in Congress, she should be able to help Annan.

Leonard also points out the flip side of the United States' successful ouster of Boutros-Ghali. The Clinton administration argued that Congress would never pay the \$1.4 billion the United States owes the United Nations as long as Boutros-Ghali held his job. Therefore, Leonard argues, Washington is now duty-bound to pay up.

"The damage done to our prestige by this means we should pay the money," Leonard says. "Countries will accept a certain amount of arrogance if we pay our bills."

At the heart of the problem are the radically different visions of the United Nations held by the United States and the rest of the world. Cocooned in Washington, Helms and company see a pin-striped bureaucracy which is at best irrelevant and at worst a threat to their xenophobic vision of the world as the free-market plaything of the United States and transnational corporations. But to the bulk of the world, the United Nations means the possibility of clean water, disease-resistant seeds, food for refugees and assistance in clearing land mines. Reconciling those who have power and abuse it with those who are powerless and abused will be Annan's fundamental task.

◀  
Jim Wurst is a journalist based at the United Nations.



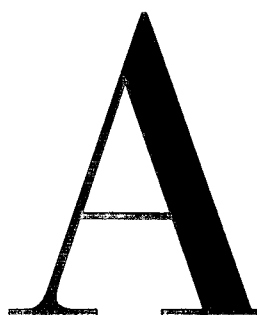
The new U.N. secretary general, Kofi Annan.

UN PHOTO 188826/ J. ISAAC





# Let them eat trade



At a worldwide food conference, held in Rome in 1974, ambitiously declared its intention to wipe out starvation within a decade. Twenty-three years later, the number of chronically malnourished people, most of them women and children, has declined from 840 million to 809 million—a surprisingly small decrease given the technological leaps in food production that have been made since then.

*The United States sings its ode to the marketplace at the World Food Summit.*

By Roger Burbach  
and David Bacon

This November, thousands of lobbyists, bureaucrats and politicians assembled again in Rome for the World Food Summit, the first such meeting since 1974. This time, those gathered at the headquarters of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) declared their intention to cut in half the number of malnourished by the year 2015.

Much has changed since the 1974 conference. Today's lower expectations

have been shaped by the ascendancy of a free-market ideology that argues the best way to fight global hunger is through deregulation, privatization and economic reforms calculated to encourage foreign investment.

On the summit's opening day, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman told the world: "Domestic market reforms have unleashed the full potential of American agriculture. Our farmers now plant for world demand instead of for government programs."

What Glickman misleadingly calls "our farmers," in a throwback to the days when family farms defined U.S. agriculture, are actually giant corporations that dominate food commercialization and production. Food is a commodity and always has been. But now it is a commodity produced in enormous quantities, travelling from country to country in search of markets and those with the money to buy. "Free and fair trade promotes global prosperity and plenty," Glick-

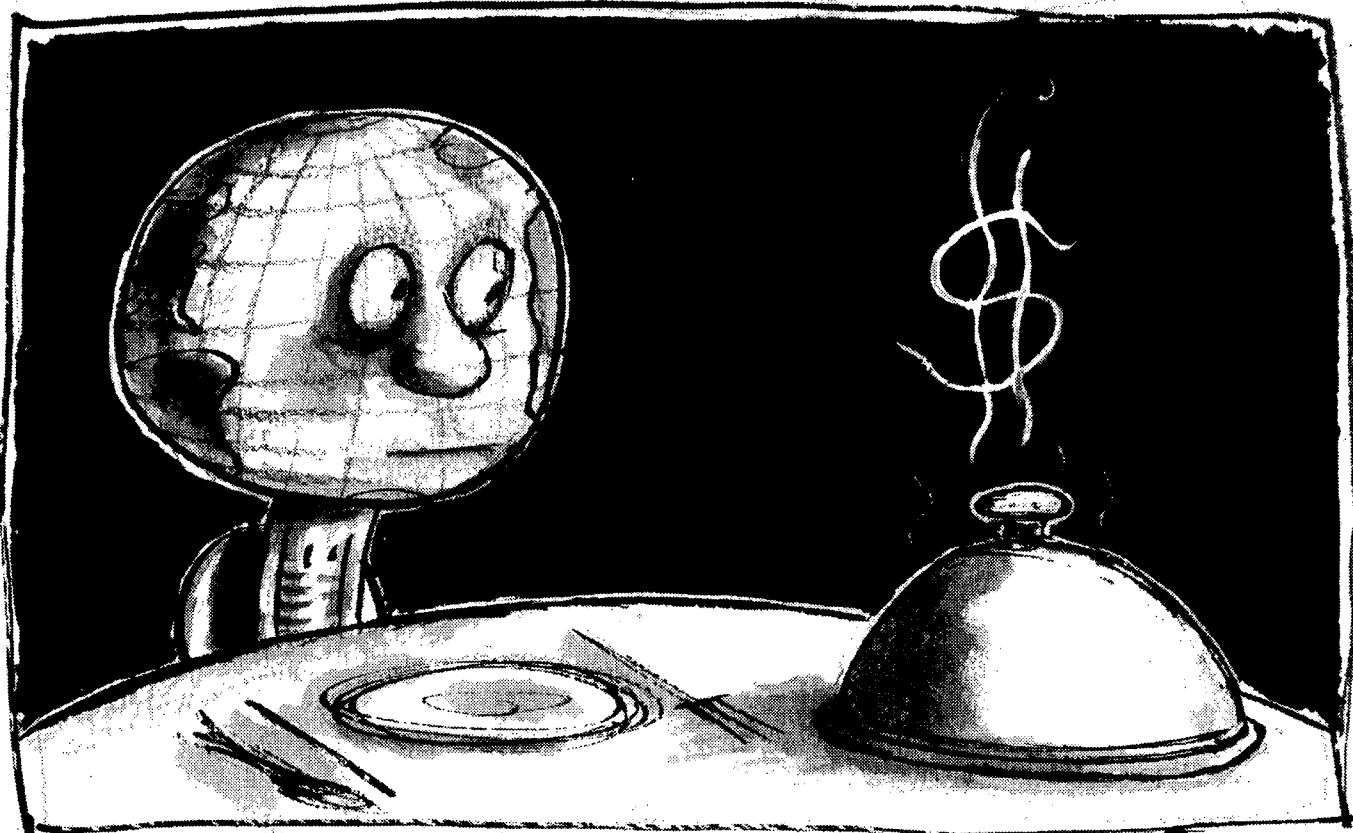
man proclaimed. "The private sector is the great untapped frontier in the world war on hunger."

Driving the point home, the United States insisted that the Rome Declaration—written before the summit opened—include Commitment Four, which begins: "We will strive to ensure that food, agricultural trade and overall trade policies are conducive to fostering food security for all through a fair and market-oriented world trade system." The commitment goes on to outline four pages of objectives, which emphasize the hegemony of the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the world's production and distribution of food.

James D. Wolfensohn, head of the World Bank, backed the U.S. position at a press conference held the same day. He listed a number of principles he said the bank would insist on with the poor, indebted countries he called the bank's "clients." First, he said, "the private sector should be mobilized to provide investment capital, production and most agricultural services." As for governments, they "should reduce heavy intervention in the rural economy and concentrate on creating an economic and regulatory environment that fosters agricultural growth."

Even with all of that said, the United States still rejected critical parts of the final summit document. After five days of high-minded speeches by international delegations about "food security" and the "universal right to food," Glickman filed a letter of exception. "The United States believes," the letter said, "that the attainment of any 'right to adequate food' or 'fundamental right to be free from hunger' is a goal or aspiration to be realized progressively that does not give rise to any international obligations nor diminish the responsibilities of national governments towards their citizens."

The official head of the U.S. delegation, the State Department's Melinda Kimball, went so far as to say that the new



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welfare reform law was not compatible with the idea of food security as a human right.

Glickman and Wolfensohn advocate what food and agribusiness scholars like Harriet Friedmann call a “new international food regime.” On a global scale, this regime is breaking down the national self-sufficiency food systems set up after World War II. Those systems were based on subsidies and tariff barriers designed to protect domestic producers, particularly in the United States, Western Europe and Japan. The Communist countries created their own separate agricultural systems. Some Third World countries, like Mexico and Brazil, attempted to subsidize and protect their local producers as well, although the United States often insisted upon dumping its food surpluses on them through the so-called Food for Peace program.

The new international food regime has three central characteristics that mark a break with the old system: First, national agricultural subsidies and protective tariffs are being removed in accordance with regional agreements like NAFTA and the Uruguay round of GATT. Secondly, transnational capital is playing a greater role in the world food-provisioning system under the guise of free trade and unrestricted foreign capital flows. Finally, national economies in the Third World and the former Soviet bloc are being forcibly restructured through structural adjustment or stabilization programs. These policy changes have contributed both to a new export-oriented emphasis in agriculture and to unprecedented degrees of economic inequality within and between countries and regions.

As a summit document written by the Minneapolis-based Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy points out, “the power over agriculture policy is shifting to the World Trade Organization. ... Farmer, consumer and environmental organizations, as well as national governments, have lost many of the policy tools they once could employ to defend food security.”

Why is there widespread hunger in a world of plenty? The answer of economists at the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the WTO is that Third World countries, under the influence of socialist ideology, made a fundamental mistake. Opting for state control or intervention in the economy, governments created a system of low agricultural productivity. These economists argue that the release of market forces will give rise to such large increases in agricultural output that hunger will eventually disappear. This is the ideological basis of the U.S. position.

This logic was not shared by many other governmental delegations, much less by the 1,200 nongovernmental organizations from 80 countries that had organized a separate Forum on World Food Security in Rome to discuss alternative ideas for meeting the challenges of hunger and malnutrition. Cheddi Jagan, prime minister of Guyana, called neoliberal ideas “a myth.” They are, Jagan said, a defense of “an unjust global economic order ... an order which robs the South of about \$500 billion annually in unjust, nonequivalent international trade.”

At the conclusion of the summit, the NGO forum was allowed four minutes to present its alternative vision to the



FAO assembly. Titled "Profit for Few or Food for All," the forum's statement pointed out that "the globalization of the world economy, along with the lack of accountability of transnational corporations and spreading patterns of over-consumption, have increased world poverty." The declaration also noted that "today's global economy is characterized by unemployment, low wages, destruction of rural economies and bankruptcies of family farmers."

The statement went on to present a six-point program for a "new model for achieving food security" that included a call for strengthening family farms, the recognition of the central role women play in food production, the importance of information and communications systems for small producers to be competitive, the need for agro-ecological principles tied to national and international research and, above all, the opening up of international institutions like the WTO, the World Bank and the FAO "to the participation of peoples' organizations and NGOs."

Despite the United States' objections, an overwhelming majority of the government delegations and NGOs insisted on making a human right to food the chief demand and commitment to emerge from the summit. The FAO's official "Plan of Action" calls for a "Code of Conduct on the Right to Food" and the negotiation of a Convention on Sustainable Food Security. The code of conduct would cover all actors from NGOs and global corporations to national governments and global lending institutions like the World Bank. The plan gives the U.N. commissioner for human

rights the task of directing all global agencies to tackle the implementation of the right to food.

For the NGOs and the broader right-to-food movement that coalesced at the summit, the main challenge is how they can advance their agenda in the face of U.S. opposition and the ascendancy of the new international food regime. "No near-term accommodation can solve or even paper over the differences," said Mark Ritchie, executive director of International Agricultural and Trade Policy. "There is a near-religious fervor to U.S. government pronouncements about the need to unleash the corporations and technology, while most NGOs and other governments believe that this can only make matters worse."

The World Food Summit makes clear that the issue of food security is too important to be left to politicians, national governments or the marketplace. International, rather than merely national, policies that involve NGOs and small- and medium-sized producers are needed to help coordinate the production and flow of agricultural products. A globalist perspective—as opposed to globalization tied to markets and private gain—is required to eradicate hunger. Hunger, like slavery in the last century and violations of basic political rights today, must be recognized as a human rights abuse that cannot be tolerated. ◀

Roger Burbach is co-author of *Globalization and its Discontents: The Rise of Postmodern Socialisms* (Pluto Press, 1997). Freelance writer and photographer David Bacon is associate editor of Pacific News Service.



The Teamsters Union  
salutes  
In These Times  
on its 20th anniversary

the  
**TEAMSTERS**

Ron Carey, General President  
Teamsters Union, 25 Louisiana Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20001

**R**ELIGION

# Catholics on the march

**L**ast March, Fabian Bruskewitz, the Roman Catholic bishop of Lincoln, Neb., excommunicated all Catholics within his jurisdiction who belong to the lay organization Call to Action (CTA), claiming its positions are "perilous to the Catholic faith." The action caused a national stir, since hundreds of priests, nuns and church employees, at least six bishops and thousands of very active laypeople are among the 18,000 members of this organization devoted to progressive reform of the Roman Catholic Church.

*Call to Action  
takes on the  
church—  
and faces the  
consequences.*

By Robert McClory

Bruskewitz excommunicated members of 11 other groups as well, including the Freemasons, Eastern Star and Planned Parenthood, but Call to Action was unquestionably the real object of his wrath. A CTA affiliate (one of 33 around the country) had just been established in Lincoln, and the members

sent the bishop a letter informing him of their new chapter. He wrote back that the difference between a dissenting Catholic and a Protestant is that the "Protestant has integrity." He gave the group a canonical warning, threatened them with excommunication if they did not repent and then followed through on the threat by imposing the church's harshest penalty, a kind of spiritual death sentence.

No other bishop has yet followed Bruskewitz's lead. But several have refused to allow CTA groups to meet on church property, and others have urged their flocks to have nothing to do with the organization.

The Chicago-based CTA represents the liberal, reformist wing of American Catholicism and stands publicly in favor of opening many questions that Pope John Paul II considers settled and closed. CTA calls for incorporating women at all levels of ministry including the priesthood; for opening the priesthood to married men; for "extensive consultation with Catholic people in developing teaching on human sexuality," including contraception; and for participation of the full church in the selection of bishops. If the church hopes to retain its moral authority, says the organization, it must reform its internal structures and abandon the trappings of a medieval autocracy.

That stance drives many church authorities, not to mention the Catholic right wing, into spasms of apoplexy. The church is not a democracy, they insist, and its medieval structure reflects its timeless essence and its fidelity to Jesus, who, in their view, placed obedience to authority over all other considerations.

If polls have any validity, the majority of U.S. Catholics support CTA positions, though most are probably unaware of the organization itself. A Gallup poll on the subject last May found that 69 percent of Catholics favor a married priesthood; 65 percent support the ordination of women; and 65 percent support laity and clergy choosing their own bishops. For more than 30 years, polls have repeatedly shown that over 85 percent of Catholics reject the official position on birth control. Given these figures, CTA can reasonably claim to be a voice for the increasingly discontented, but still largely silent, majority of the church.

The current organization is the stepchild of a Call to Action conference held in Detroit 20 years ago, during the nation's bicentennial celebration. U.S. bishops assembled some 1,400 delegates and 1,500 observers from practically every part of the country and asked them, in the open spirit of the 1963-1965 Second Vatican Council, to determine the church's major projects for the next 100 years.

The assembly declared that the church has an obligation to become a more forceful presence in the world. It said the



church must use its enormous resources and moral authority for the good of society, and stand up to the chronic racism, poverty, sexism, militarism and rootlessness of modern society. But, said the delegates, amid considerable debate, the church's prophetic voice will fall on deaf ears unless it undertakes an internal reorganization. Accordingly, the delegates approved a sizable body of resolutions calling for major reconsideration of church positions on birth control, celibacy for priests, homosexuality and the involvement of laypeople in important decisions.

Fearing the revolutionary implications of these proposals, the bishops went home, did nothing and hoped the storm would blow over. The strategy worked: Call to Action died of neglect almost everywhere. In Chicago, however, where many Catholics chafed under Cardinal John Cody's despotic regime, several independent organizations of priests, nuns, Catholic school teachers and concerned laity urged an ongoing follow-up to the Detroit conference.

Dan Daley, a former priest in Chicago's inner city, was among the small group of Chicagoans who formed the nucleus of the group. "I had seen how the church could make a difference in people's lives," Daley says. "Here was this huge institution that crossed political, national and ethnic barriers. If we were ever going to make a dent in creating a better world for people, the church was a good place to start."

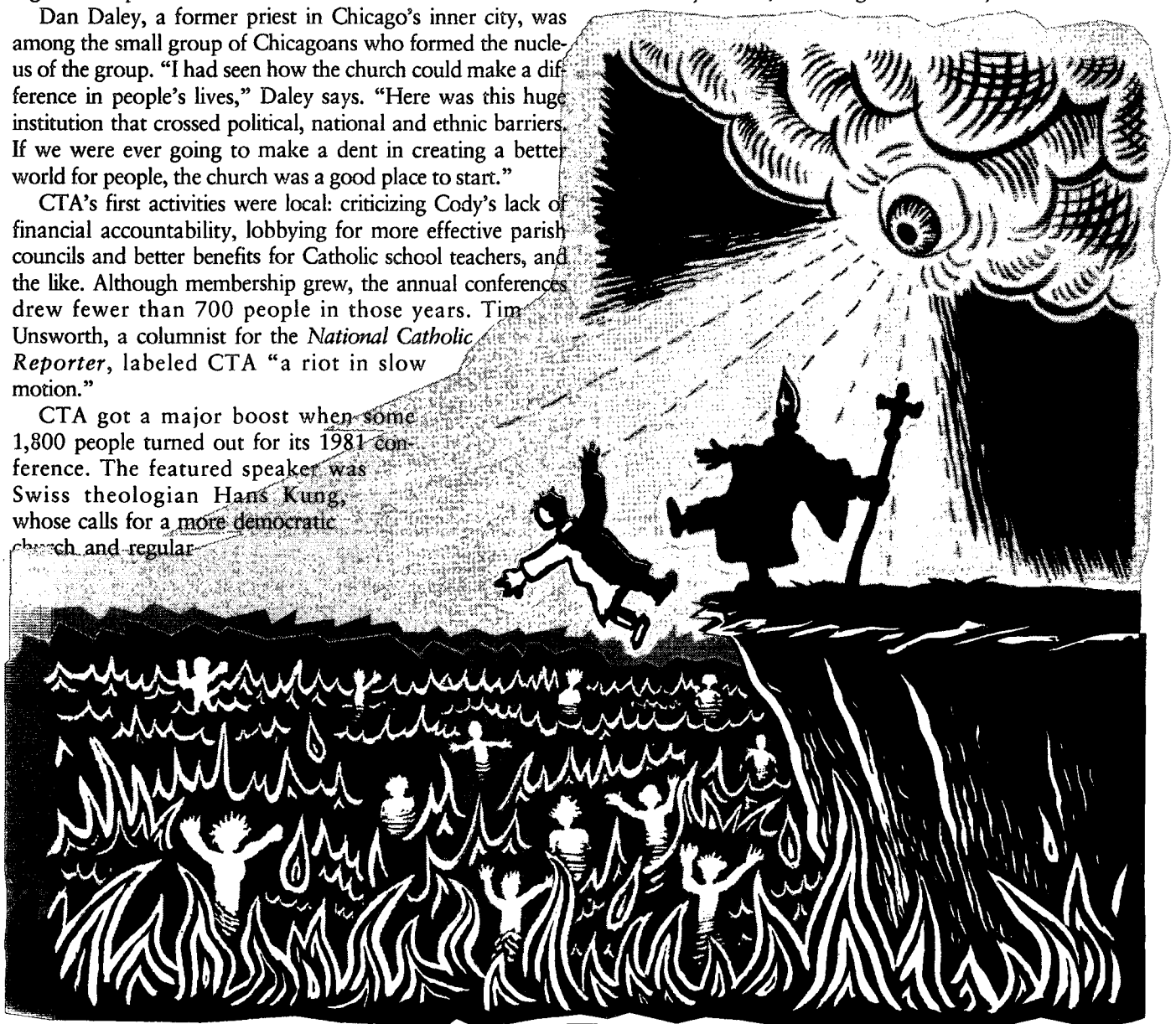
CTA's first activities were local: criticizing Cody's lack of financial accountability, lobbying for more effective parish councils and better benefits for Catholic school teachers, and the like. Although membership grew, the annual conferences drew fewer than 700 people in those years. Tim Unsworth, a columnist for the *National Catholic Reporter*, labeled CTA "a riot in slow motion."

CTA got a major boost when some 1,800 people turned out for its 1981 conference. The featured speaker was Swiss theologian Hans Kung, whose calls for a more democratic church and regular

skirmishes with Vatican authorities had made him a folk hero for many Catholics. Local Catholic progressives still recall the 1981 conference as a kind of Woodstock.

By the early '80s, Cardinal Cody was dead, and the style of his successor, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, was such a welcome contrast that there seemed comparatively little to fret about in the local church. Around this time, CTA began to address broader social issues more directly. Members participated in the nuclear disarmament movement. CTA campaigned against U.S. policy in Central America and shipped tons of clothing, furniture and other supplies to the poor of Nicaragua. Political candidates were scrutinized regarding their positions on nuclear war, race relations, the environment and welfare policy. CTA even collaborated with the institutional church, sponsoring musical productions based on the U.S. bishops' hard-hitting, but rarely-read, pastoral letters on peace and economics.

At this juncture, CTA might well have joined forces with



secular and other religious organizations of the left working for civil and human rights in a variety of societal settings. But that shift did not occur then, and, to the distress of some CTA supporters, it has not happened since. The person most responsible for keeping CTA focused primarily on internal church reform is Pope John Paul II. To the world, the pope eloquently endorses human rights, condemns political repression and calls for openness and toleration. To the church, however, he is adamant that there will be no adaptation of doctrine, no openness and no toleration, especially on those issues which energized the original Call to Action meeting.

The pope has tried to shore up his social conservatism in the next generation by appointing as bishops only those who explicitly share his opposition to contraception and the ordination of women. Meanwhile, through various Vatican offices, he has cracked down on Catholic universities, religious orders, nuns, priests and theologians. (He has, for example, forbidden Hans Kung to present himself as a Catholic theologian.) He demands strict literal adherence to his directives. He has condemned liberation theology and silenced its proponents. The new, universal catechism of the Catholic Church, published in 1994, ignores long-accepted developments in scripture study and other areas of theology as if Vatican II never happened.

**I**n 1990, CTA prepared a Call for Reform pastoral letter, expressing the organization's conviction that calls for justice in the world must be accompanied by a movement for justice within the church itself. When Hans Kung read the statement at a national church meeting in New York City, CTA was swamped with requests for copies and inquiries from around the country about these unknown Chicago reformers. On Ash Wednesday, in March 1990, the statement was printed as a full-page ad in the *New York Times*, signed by 4,500 Catholics. Within a few months, the Call for Reform attracted 25,000 more signers, and CTA had become a national organization.

CTA has steadily grown and assumed an increasingly visible national presence since then. CTA regional affiliates have sprung up in New Jersey, Florida, Minnesota, Michigan and elsewhere. Bishop Bruskewitz's highly publicized pre-emptive strike at the tiny affiliate in Nebraska had an unintended result: Some 4,000 new members joined CTA this year, and its national conference in Detroit in November drew 5,000 people, the largest attendance ever.

Mary Ann Savard, who has been CTA's board president for 10 years, does not believe the surge of support is the result of the organization's own recruiting efforts. "There are forces at work that we don't control," she says, "like the forces in society that created social activism, the civil rights movement, the women's movement. Just as people are not content anymore to let the old boys in the smoky back room control their lives, Catholics today aren't content to let a few men run the church and send up a little smoke to tell us

when they've picked the next pope."

CTA has been a major supporter of the growing number of "small faith communities" across the country: groups as small as six and as large as 200 which meet regularly in homes or other locales for prayer and scripture discussion because they don't feel they're getting adequately "fed" at the local church. "People are beginning to realize this is where the grass-roots church is today," says Linda Pieczynski, the current CTA president. "This is where the base is building."

**C**TA wrestles continually with the urge to become more involved in the world "out there." At the 1996 CTA conference in Detroit, Hans Kung suggested that life in this world has become so precarious that the world's religions must concentrate cooperatively on developing a global ethic. French Bishop Jacques Gaillot, deposed by the Vatican from his diocese for his liberal views, told conference attendees that today church reform is less important than concern for the poor and the marginalized. And Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton of Detroit urged the organization to see social action and church reform as two sides of the same coin.

CTA will likely explore a more activist social agenda in the year ahead. But church reform will not take a back seat. One reason is that CTA's membership is predominantly female, and the Vatican's intransigence on the issue of women priests has been particularly galling to hundreds of thousands of Catholic women. Many contend that nothing will be right within Roman Catholicism until it ceases to be one of the few remaining institutions of Western society that discriminates against women as a matter of principle.

As a final legacy to the church just three months before his death, Chicago's Cardinal Bernardin asked Catholics at various places along the spectrum of belief to search for common ground—to gather together, to speak the truth as they know it and to listen in good faith to each other. CTA welcomed the cardinal's initiative as a first step toward building a bridge over troubled waters. On some issues, there may indeed be common ground; on others, such as women priests and sexual morality, the differences are extreme.

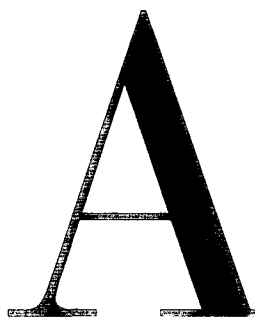
Simultaneous with CTA's November conference in Detroit, a counter-conference of Catholic conservatives was held a few miles away in a Detroit suburb. The leading speaker was Mother Angelica, whose Eternal Word Television Network continually beams a pre-Vatican II theology and spirituality to viewers across the nation. Organizers of the counter-event pledged to vehemently oppose any liberalization in the church. Though the prospects for compromise are obviously not bright at this moment, CTA supporters agree the effort must be made if the Catholic Church is to be a healthy and significant organization in the 21st century. ◀

**Robert McClory** is a professor of journalism at Northwestern University and a long-time member of Call to Action.



## ENVIRONMENT

# Moving the mountain



*Residents of a  
Florida town in  
the shadow of  
"Mt. Dioxin"  
win a  
rare victory  
over the EPA.*

By Gary Barlow

As I drive through the Pensacola, Fla., neighborhood of Rosewood Terrace with longtime resident Frank Pickett, two things catch my eye. First are the small white, homemade crosses in the front yards of home after home. The crosses stand out sharply in what otherwise appears to be a typically modest middle-class community of neat wood and brick homes. "Each cross means somebody who lived there has died of cancer," Pickett remarks. Some homes are marked with more than one.

The second feature, visible from all over the town, is the Escambia Treating Company's toxic-waste site, known locally as Mt. Dioxin. It is a huge pile of contaminated soil, 260,000 cubic yards, covered by a black piece of plastic that resembles a trash bag. The cover looks both ominous and insubstantial, as if it was put there to hold back

a danger it can't possibly contain.

The dirt pile covers a pit 40 feet deep—the source of the poison—which may hold another 200,000 cubic yards of dioxin-riddled soil. Nobody knows for sure. For decades, Escambia, like many other companies in the south, treated wood with creosote, a common preservative. Many homes in Rosewood Terrace were paid for with wages earned at Escambia before the company went bankrupt in early 1991.

We continue through the neighborhood, an African-American community nestled in an old industrial section of Pensacola, until Pickett tells me to pull up and park next to the train tracks where a freight train sits idled. Peering between the freight cars, he points out the Agrico Chemical site, described by one environmental scientist as "probably more contaminated by a broad range of carcinogenic chemicals that threaten people living immediately next door ... than any other contaminated site in the country."

The site, an area half a mile wide, is busy with bulldozers digging and piling up dirt. "They're supposed to keep it all sprayed with water to keep the dust down," Pickett says, "but they don't spray it much, unless people start calling." Agrico, which also closed down in the early '90s, manufactured agricultural fertilizers and pesticides.

Local leaders estimate that more than 50 people have died of dioxin-related cancer in this community of just over 350 families. While the EPA discounts other health risks from dioxin exposure, environmental studies show that dioxin exposure at levels 10 to 100 times lower than the official EPA risk standard of 1 part per billion can cause serious learning disabilities and other birth defects in children, dysfunctional immune systems in adults and children, and serious fertility disorders in both women and men.

The EPA's policy on cleaning up dioxin-contaminated sites is driven not by science, but by a combination of political factors and budgetary constraints. Lois Gibbs of the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes argues that the EPA has no comprehensive system for determining where dioxin-contaminated sites are and cleaning them up. "Nobody knows how many there are," she says. "There may be hundreds, there may be thousands. The EPA hasn't done a survey on the question. Sites get attention only when affected communities like Rosewood Terrace demand it."

When people began noticing a disproportionate incidence of cancer and other health problems in Rosewood Terrace in the late '80s, the EPA tested the site. Those tests showed dioxin-contamination levels exceeding the EPA's trigger of 1 part per billion. In 1991, the EPA appeared without warning and began digging up the dirt at the Escambia site. The EPA had chosen to make the site an "emergency removal" location rather than placing it on the National Priorities List

of Superfund sites. Because of the public hearings and more extensive testing and cleanup standards set by the Superfund program, it costs a great deal more to clean up a Superfund site than to "remove" one. The EPA rules for emergency removal sites allow for almost no community participation or input. "It's a lot like being under martial law," says Frances Dunham, a Pensacola resident.

By early 1992, concerned residents of Rosewood Terrace began meeting to discuss the EPA's actions. Ignoring warnings of significant airborne contamination by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection's air program director (who the EPA administrator for the site called "an idiot"), the EPA kept digging until late 1992. To this day, the full extent of soil contamination at the site is unknown—the EPA simply announced one day that it had exceeded the budget for the project and covered the site with the plastic barrier. Then the agency left, offering no plan, answers or solutions.

Meanwhile, community residents had formed Citizens Against Toxic Exposure (CATE) and were pushing for Superfund designation. The group was up against enormous odds. A 1992 study by the staff of the *National Law Journal* found that it takes up to 20 percent longer for hazardous-waste sites in minority communities to get placed on the National Priorities List. "White communities see faster action, better results and stiffer penalties (against polluters) than communities where blacks, Hispanics and other minorities live," the study reported. "This unequal protection often occurs whether the community is wealthy or poor." In the early days of President Bill Clinton's first term, he issued an executive order directing the EPA to rectify this disparity. But with typical Clintonian ambivalence, he failed to put in place any enforcement mechanisms. The only concrete action called for by the order was the creation of the National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC). While NEJAC has never been fully funded and has no direct power over the EPA, it has consistently managed to confront EPA officials with demands for action at sites like those in Pensacola.

Undaunted by the EPA's history, Rosewood Terrace's CATE demanded that the agency relocate all of the community's 358 families. But the EPA didn't place Rosewood Terrace on the National Priorities List until December 1994. On April 30, 1996, the agency announced it would relocate 66 of the 358 families in the community and would continue to evaluate relocation options for additional families. In response to pressure from CATE, the EPA came back with a new plan four months later, adding another 35 families to the list but

still leaving over 250 in potentially contaminated homes.

Finally, in response to unrelenting public criticism from CATE and from national environmental organizations like the Citizens' Clearinghouse for Hazardous Wastes (including a full-page ad in the Florida edition of *USA Today*), the EPA announced on October 1 that all 358 families in the community would be relocated. The EPA attributed its change of heart to "the best scientific information available about the community's unique environmental, health and safety factors." The agency awarded the relocation contract to the Army Corps of Engineers, which estimates that it will take about three years to relocate the entire community. In

the meantime, the EPA promises to include the community in all decisions about continuing with the cleanup. Most residents hope to be moved within a year.

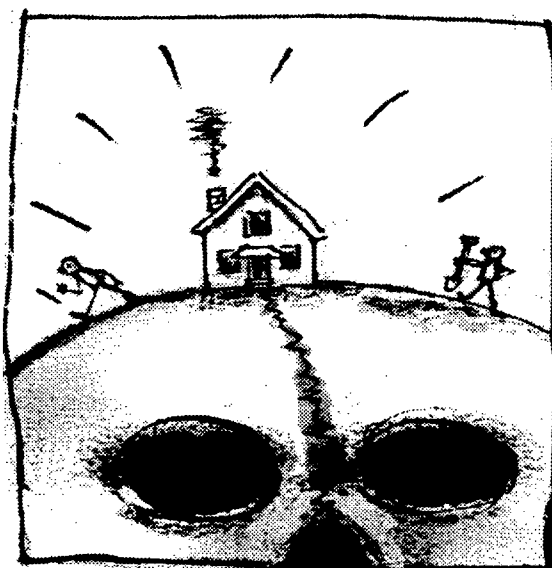
The EPA has yet to issue its formal justification for the relocation. If the EPA cites health factors, particularly specific levels of dioxin exposure, as the basis for the Pensacola decision, other affected communities around the country will be able to use it as a benchmark against which to compare their own risks, and, if necessary, demand similar relocations. The delay in releasing the written justification—along with rumors of internal arguments over what the risk assessment

numbers for dioxin should be—suggests that the EPA may be trying to avoid setting that kind of precedent.

This disturbs scientists like Joel Hirschorn, a leading authority on dioxin contamination who has advised CATE throughout their struggle. He has been urging the EPA to adopt a lower risk assessment threshold on dioxin. He suggests 2 to 4 parts per trillion to start with, a figure which could be adjusted to take into account site-specific information. He argues that the EPA is using outdated figures that have been discredited by more recent studies. "The scientific community has sent a clear message that there is no safe level of dioxin exposure," he says. Like many others, Hirschorn charges that the EPA's current risk assessment numbers are based largely on political and budgetary factors, rather than on the health and well-being of affected communities.

The residents of Rosewood Terrace are happy just to see some light at the end of the tunnel. "Fighting the EPA has been rough as the devil," Pickett says, shaking his head. "We bought these homes thinking they would be home for life. Then we found we had nothing." For Pickett and his neighbors, the fight with the EPA won't be over until every family has a safe new home. ◀

**Gary Barlow** is a freelance writer in Tallahassee, Fla.



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# C L A S S I F I E D S

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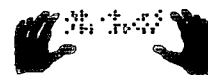
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*Continued from page 32*

switched her assignment. At the welfare office, she filed, answered phones and distributed mail. She says her supervisors noted her competence and had her train a newly hired city clerk. They told Stewart, who's "pushing 50," that they had put her name in for a permanent job, but had no control over hiring. Then they asked her to take over compiling detailed monthly caseload reports for two dozen caseworkers who handle about 500 welfare recipients. "If I was on a job, this would be considered a promotion," she observes, "but I didn't get any salary increase, even though I was doing a much more difficult job."

Then one Friday last summer, Stewart had to go into the hospital for some tests. When she returned to work on Monday, she was told she had been removed from the roster and no longer had a "job" at the office. Her supervisor told her to wait for a letter clarifying the situation.

Three weeks and no letter later, Stewart inquired at the city's Office of Employment Services. "I spoke to one of the supervisors there. The first day, he told me their computers were down. So I went back the next day. Then he told me I was exempt from the WEP program (and did not have to work). He didn't know the reason. He told me it could be because I requested sick leave. I said I didn't request any sick leave. He said it could be because of child-care problems. I said I have two teenage children—I don't need child care. He told me I'd receive a letter."

After three and a half months, she got a letter telling her to report for a new WEP assignment.

"They assigned me to cleaning out vacant lots. I told them I'm still needed back at my old office. They told me they can't reassign me. They sent me a memo saying I have to report in work boots. I don't own any work boots."

### *"permanent employment is your goal"*

Meanwhile, Eddie's six-month assignment at Bellevue ended in November. Now he's doing a month in "Job Club," which is supposed to teach job-search skills. "I did all that 14 months ago," Eddie says, "I went to a workshop to teach me interviewing skills, how to put a resume together."

If participants haven't found work after four weeks of Job Club, they're sent back to WEP for another six-month stint, but probably not to their old assignment, which likely has been filled by someone else. This has taken the wind out of Eddie's sails. "I feel like the bottles outside: recycled," he says.

Eddie misses Bellevue. "It wasn't a real job, but I took it like it was. My supervisor was telling me, 'I wish I could do something to get you on permanently because you're an excellent worker.' They gave me a recommendation letter." Eddie keeps the letter in a folder with copies of his resume and certificates from several training programs.

Eddie stays in touch with the union representative at Bellevue, who tells him there will be actual job openings for WEP workers in January. But Eddie worries that, out of sight, he'll be out of mind when hiring decisions are made.

Eddie has counseled young people as a volunteer at a neighborhood center, so he took the city's civil service exam for youth counselor jobs. He hasn't heard back yet. He says he passed tests for positions in the post office and police department, "but they got a freeze on. They said once the freeze is off, they'll get back to me."

Most WEP workers put in 20 hours a week, theoretically leaving plenty of time to look for work, but there are often other obstacles. Eva Simon recently applied for a seasonal job at United Parcel Service. Lacking money for "extras, like the telephone," Simon left her daughter's number. But her daughter does not have an answering machine, and Simon fears UPS may have called but not reached her.

### *"contribution to the quality of life"*

Without WEP, Eddie says, "New York City would not be able to conduct its business." He's increasingly correct. WEP workers are now a common sight as they pick up garbage in city parks that had been getting dirtier because of major cuts in the Parks Department. WEP workers also are becoming an essential but largely unseen component of the welfare bureaucracy.

But what about their own quality of life? Unable to make ends meet, Eddie recently sent his 17-year-old son to live with the boy's grandmother. "I had to tell him, 'There's only a certain amount of food left. There's nothing Daddy can do.' Do you know how that felt?" Eddie asks.

Brenda Stewart's two children live with her, but she says it's hard to keep them in clothes that fit. "My son is always outgrowing shoes," she says, "but I couldn't buy him a new pair of sneakers when school started. I had to borrow money to buy him a couple pairs of pants and a shirt."

Stewart's situation, and that of her co-workers, is only going to get worse with the federal welfare repeal law, which will throw more welfare recipients into a job market with very few jobs for them.

Stewart challenges Giuliani "to maintain his family on what I receive to maintain my family, deal with not having proper supplies to work with—and tell me after that the program is working."

Chris Seymour is a Brooklyn-based writer and folk singer.

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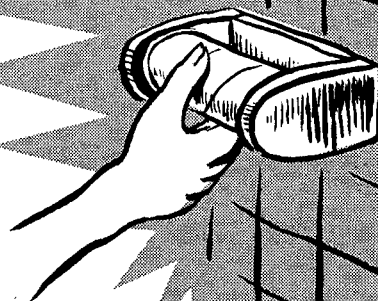
# WEP dreams

By Chris Seymour

## Step 1

*In the Work Experience Program you will have the chance to develop new work skills while also making an important contribution to the quality of life in New York City. The Work Experience Program is, however, only a stepping stone on your way to becoming independent. Permanent employment is your goal. The Work Experience Program can help you go from welfare to work.*

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Firmly grasp and remove cardboard core from previous roll.

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oint to that paragraph and you will get a bitter laugh from workers in WEP. Participants in New York City's version of workfare tell a very different story than those encouraging words suggest. "We're just working for our food stamps and benefits," says Eva Simon, a 43-year-old mother of three who lives in Harlem. "I thought it was a six-month program to train you so that when you finish, you can get a job."

Thirty-seven thousand of the city's welfare recipients are in WEP, with more on the way. New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani plans to move almost all able-bodied welfare recipients into the program, ostensibly as a transition to real, paid work. But the city's private economy is only sluggishly generating jobs, while its public sector is cutting services and payroll. There is much work New York needs done, but there are precious few jobs.

### "new work skills"

"How is it going to give us skills?" asks Simon, who does 20 hours a week of janitorial work at a Harlem welfare office in

exchange for her \$97 welfare check every two weeks plus \$220 a month in food stamps. "We change paper towels and toilet paper and take out the trash," she says. "If it's a good weather day, we sweep outside the building."

"What kind of new work skills?" echoes Rosemarie Vargas, a mother of four, who heads the PTA at P.S. 97 on the Lower East Side and works off her welfare benefits in a nearby school-district office. "This work I'm doing I already know how to do. I am collating, filing, answering phones, being a messenger—which means getting sodas for people—and bringing paperwork up and down stairs."

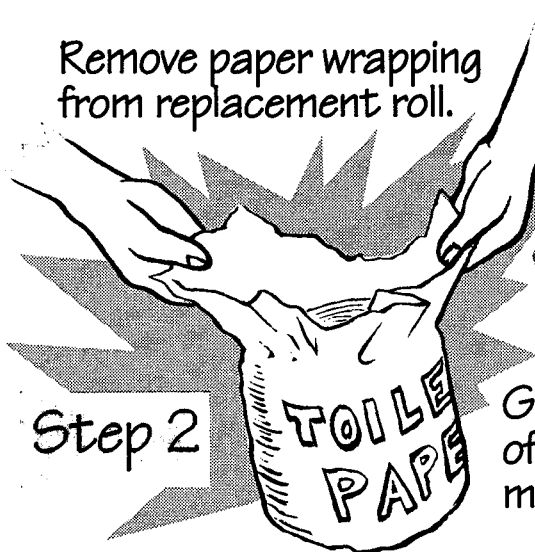
Some WEP workers say they do the same work as permanent, salaried employees. Eddie, a 37-year-old single father who asked that his last name not be used, until recently cleaned floors and emptied garbage at Bellevue Hospital. "I'm working next to someone making \$600 to \$700 every two weeks doing the same work I'm doing, compared to me making \$54," he complains.

Brenda Stewart, who now cleans vacant lots, had made herself indispensable at a Brooklyn welfare office until a computer key-stroke somewhere, which no one has been able to explain,

Continued on page 31

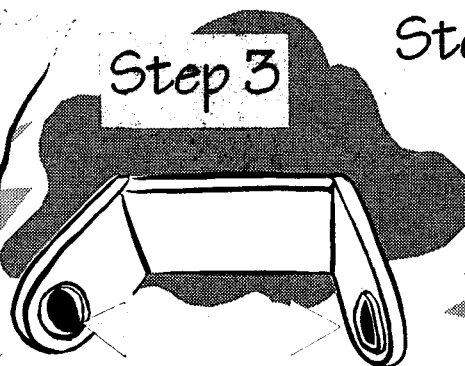
Remove paper wrapping from replacement roll.

## Step 2



## Step 3

Gently spread the "ears" of the holder so that it might accept the new roll.



## Step 4

Wiggle the roll back and forth until it seats itself.

